

Table 5

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Table 5

by [infandomswetrust](#)

Summary

Will gave up his work as a homicide detective and is now desperately trying to leave the darkness behind. He starts working at Phillip's Bay, a fine restaurant in Baltimore. One day a guest comes and changes everything.

Restaurant AU

Notes

Not beta'd

The title will make sense after the second chapter

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Hey, I actually didn't wanna upload this until [Who you are](#) was all up but it's my birthday and I'm full of endorphins and can't make rational decisions so here's my newest misdeed.

Enjoy!

It was a busy evening in Phillip's Bay. The fine restaurant was always well-visited, but tonight it seemed like every single person in Baltimore, who could afford the posh location, had felt the urge to come here. Will hurried from table to table, his feet never stopping, always moving, always running- *dancing* through the restaurant. Not that he'd actually know how to dance. How could he? He barely remembered his mother and the only thing his father had ever taught him was fishing. And drinking. It was strange enough for a simple Louisiana-boy to be waiting tables in one of the finest restaurants in Baltimore, wearing a tuxedo and a bowtie he could normally never even dream of affording. While everything about this should have felt uncomfortable for the introverted young man; the noble crowd, the huge amount of people and stress, the sophisticated clothes he *loathed*; he knew it was better for him than his former job at the Baltimore PD. He had been a detective, working mostly homicides, and while his ability to slip into the killers' minds was destroying his psyche, a serial rapist who had killed his last victim finally did the rest and destroyed his body too. Even now, four months later, he could feel the scar where the man's knife had stabbed through his abdomen burning underneath the silken layers of his clothing and he unconsciously ran a hand over it.

Will had spent most summers helping out in his uncle's inn when he was a teen, so he knew quite a bit about waiting tables. That plus the good word Alana; a friend he knew from college times and whose best friend was a waitress in Phillip's, had put in for him had gotten him this job. It was his third week and he found it surprisingly easy to adept to the new surroundings. Beverly, Alana's friend, was really likeable and she had helped him a lot at first. Will was anything but sociable, and the hardest part was making eye contact, let alone conversation with the guests, so he mostly kept his gaze riveted on the plates he was carrying, a habit Beverly tried to make him break since some guests might consider it rude.

"Will, don't fall asleep there! And don't forget to smile!" she whispered and snapped him out of his reverie with a slight grin, while she pressed a wine menu into his hands gently. She knew how easily Will got lost in thought.

“Table 7 wants liquor. You can recommend the good stuff, trust me, they can afford it.” she said with a small chuckle. Will let his gaze scan over her features, avoiding her eyes but seeing enough to know there was something important about that table. Number 7 was usually hers, and he wasn’t a sommelier, so why send him for the wine order?

“Who are ‘they’?” he asked warily. Something was off, otherwise she would have handled it herself, but she wanted *him* to go.

“Bedelia DuMaurier, she’s a colleague of Alana’s and one of our regulars. She brought company tonight, I can tell you; it’s quite the buzz over there. Not that I’d get a word they’re saying.”

“A colleague of Alana’s?” Will asked and then it dawned on him. “You want to send me to a table full of psychiatrists?!”

She just grinned and took the plates the chef was handing through the kitchen window.

“Relax, Will. They want to meet you, I think Alana let her tongue slip.” her smile faded a bit and turned into an apologetic frown before she hurried off.

Great. *They want to meet you.* Of course they do. Will Graham, the phenomenon. Will Graham, the detective that couldn’t bring himself to shoot a rapist because he had empathized with him. Will Graham, the man the BSU had been interested in for ages. Will Graham, the man that could slip into anyone’s mentality; the only price for doing so his own sanity. Will Graham, the man with the mind every psychiatrist in the state was dying to get their fingers on. And now he was forced to face an entire table of them. He took a deep breath and walked towards table 7, clutching at the wine list. A group of five people sat at the table. A woman, who he was immediately able to identify as Bedelia DuMaurier, looked up and she saw him approaching.

“You must be Will Graham. It’s a pleasure to finally meet you.-” she started, her voice calm with detached curiosity.

“Dr. DuMaurier, all due respect, I am here as your waiter and that alone.” Will cut in sharper than what could be considered polite yet way calmer he had expected himself to be. He bit his lip and forced himself to keep staring at the woman’s nose, creating at least the illusion of eye-contact. An awkward silence settled over the table and Dr. DuMaurier raised her eyebrows. Someone cleared his throat and a smooth, accented voice from the other side of the table said:

“We will have the Rioja 95 if it is still on the menu.” as if nothing had happened and without even asking for the wine list.

Will was incredibly thankful and nodded. Without even darting a glance at the man he quickly walked away. He could feel their stares on his back and hear their speculations in his head. Suddenly he felt nauseous and had to support himself on a side board. The warm, soothing voice still resonated in his head and he turned to take a look at his rescuer. The man was wearing a pristine tailored suit that made even the fine clothing of everyone else around him seem classless. He had ashen blond hair that seemed almost golden when he leaned

slightly forward and the light from the crystal chandelier caught the top of his head. Will's gaze lingered on the man's hands as he used them to emphasize the words he was saying to Dr. DuMaurier. Then he let his eyes wander further upwards, and he watched how gracefully his elegantly curved lips moved when he talked. The man's cheekbones were sharper than they had any right to be and when Will finally reached his deep calm maroon eyes, he realized the man was returning his stare. Will felt a blush creeping up his neck and the nausea hit him with even stronger force than before. He quickly averted his eyes and realized his lips were slightly parted- Jesus, how long had he been staring at the man like that?? When he abruptly straightened his back and moved towards the kitchen he almost bumped into Beverly. She realized he wasn't feeling well and gave him a sympathetic smile. She was about to say something but then one of her tables called for the bill and she just squeezed Will's shoulder reassuringly and hurried to her table. Will wasn't exactly a fan of body contact but he had gotten used to Bev's occasional pats; he just didn't find them as comforting, as they were meant to be. During the next few hours Will didn't have much time to think about anything other than the ridiculous amount of orders but now and then he glanced at the man on table 7, who always seemed to be looking the exact same second Will was, and whenever their eyes met, Will felt the nausea again.

He wasn't usually attracted to men; he didn't consider it a certain impossibility and it had happened before, he just *usually* wasn't. But there was something about this man that drew Will in like the strong, forceful stream that had once smashed his father's fishing boat against a rock. The boat had been completely trashed, but Will had spent months trying to fix it nonetheless, it wasn't like he had had anything better to do. When the group of table 7 paid and moved to leave, Will quickly walked over there. He knew he owed them an apology, and he didn't want to seem rude.

"Dr. DuMaurier, I wanted to apologize for my behavior earlier. I had no right to--"

She quickly raised her hand, politely waving him off.

"Please, Mr. Graham, if anything I have to apologize. Given your current profession it is obvious you are no longer interested in anything that has to do with your past life, and I should have respected that."

Will looked up to meet her eyes briefly, surprised by her honest words and felt obligated to share a piece of truth himself in return.

"I just don't like people poking around in my brain..." he admitted. He was very aware of the man in the pristine suit standing behind Dr. DuMaurier, and while he had not yet dared to look at him, he could feel the man's eyes on himself. The woman nodded understandable and stepped aside to introduce the man behind her.

"Mr. Graham, this is Dr. Lecter. I intended to introduce you to him earlier, but..." she looked back at Will with a slight smile. He licked his lips nervously and shook the strong, warm hand that was being extended to him. Naturally he avoided the man's eyes and stared at his lips instead. He could see them part to say something when suddenly the piercing sound of breaking glass cut through the air. Will jerked his head up and turned around, seeing one of the other waiters standing in the middle of shards and quickly excused himself. Dr. DuMaurier called out while he was already rushing away.

“It was nice to meet you, Mr. Graham!”

He nodded and focused on the broken glass in front of him. As they approached the exit, he looked up and when the man-*Dr. Lecter*- suddenly turned around in the door, their eyes meet one last time. The slightest hint of a smile danced over the man’s features. Before Will had the chance to bring himself to smile back, he had stepped out and the door closed.

“Thank god.” Bev sighed after the last guest had left and immediately ran towards the kitchen.

“Please tell me there’s still some of that crème brûlée left!” she yelled through the kitchen window and grinned triumphantly when the chef handed her a plate.

Will took a seat at one of the now empty tables. He was exhausted and the constant stress hadn’t exactly helped his headache.

“What do you want, Will? There’s still some of the soup and the pasta left, and I think...” Bev shouted to him from the kitchen. Will quickly interrupted her.

“It’s fine. I’m not hungry.”

When she reached the table she was still frowning about his words.

“You’re always ‘not hungry’. I’m not gonna wake up one day and learn you’ve managed to starve to death while *working in a restaurant*, am I?”

Will showed a small smile and accepted the glass of scotch she offered him.

“So how did it go on table 7?” Bev asked carefully. Will didn’t miss the fact that she had waited to ask until he had gulped down a good two fingers of scotch.

“About as bad as you’d expect...” he muttered and took another gulp. He considered asking her about Dr. Lecter, but quickly dismissed the thought.

“So which one of you geniuses dropped the wine bottle?” Brian Zeller sat down at their table and slammed his toque against Bev’s shoulder teasingly.

“Neither of *us*, and I swear if you hit me one more time I’ll use that silly hat to strangle you.”

“It’s not a ‘silly hat’, it’s a chef’s cap, penguin.” Zeller retorted, motioning at her smoking.

“Why don’t you go annoy Price? Where is he anyway?” Bev asked with a sigh.

“How would I know? I’ve been buried in soup up to my elbows until now.” Zeller answered and quickly stood up when he made out Price, the restaurant’s maître, at the door. Once they were gone, Will decided to leave too, not without receiving a disapproving grunt from Bev. When he got back to Wolf Trap he realized how tired he was.

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After three hours of sleep at most, he got up and showered. The nightmares seemed to get worse every night. With a small sigh he let his dogs out and watched them from the porch. It wasn't long until his thoughts wandered to the previous evening. He realized Beverly had said Bedelia was a regular, meaning he'd probably have to face her again soon. On one hand he was hoping this would have been their first and last encounter, on the other he *really* wanted to find out more about the man who had burnt himself into his head with his eyes yesterday. He would see him again a lot sooner than he had anticipated.

Two relatively uneventful weeks later, Will shifted from one foot to the other in a supermarket. Places like this always made him uneasy, the hasty people, the loud conversations, the chaos... But his fridge was, as usually, empty, and if Alana wouldn't constantly remind him, he'd probably forget nutrition completely.

He was standing in front of the huge selection of fruits when it happened. A woman hurried past him and gave him a strong push as she did. He stumbled forward and suddenly felt a firm hand on his upper arm, steadying him. When he turned around maroon eyes met his blue ones and the 'thank you' he had been about to mumble got stuck in his throat.

"Hello, Mr. Graham. You might not remember me-" the man began.

"No, I remember you, Dr. Lecter." Will said, maybe a little too quickly. "You can call me Will." he added. The man smiled.

"Then I must insist you call me Hannibal."

Will focused on the strawberries in front of him and couldn't stop repeating the word over and over again in his head. Hannibal. The doctor let go of his arm and Will realized he had probably been holding it longer than could possibly be considered normal.

"So what brings someone like you to a simple supermarket?" Will asked and glanced down at himself. He was wearing dark jeans and a blue flannel shirt. It had been easy to blend in in the restaurant, with his dark smoking and his hair neatly gelled back, but here, with his glasses and his hair as a curly mess, he couldn't help but feel *exposed*, especially when he noticed Hannibal was wearing a suit only slightly less elegant than two weeks ago.

"Will, contrary to what you might believe, I don't think myself above another person simply because of their or my social status."

Will looked up in surprise. Without having exchanged more than three sentences the man had detected his rejection against the high society he had to serve six days a week. But then again, he was a psychiatrist. The thought made Will anxious and in an instant he got the renowned feeling of being psychoanalyzed once again.

"I didn't say you do." he retorted dryly.

"The implication was quite clear."

Someone like you. That's what Will had said.

Again, typical psychiatrist. Always reading between the lines.

“Wouldn’t it be a paradox if someone like *me* would be prejudiced?” the young man said. “Hypothetically speaking.” he added.

“Are you often met with prejudice, Will?”

Will glanced at the man, who seemed to have meant the question entirely serious. He thought of the many articles about him on Tattlecrime. Dr. Lecter must have read them.

“I’m often met with-” he paused and pursed his lips “-a lack of understanding.” he said at length.

“We lack of understanding about everything until we learn to broaden our mind. Before a child can form a sentence it has to understand the meaning of its words.”

“Except *I’m* not a textbook.” Will said sharply. “I’m aware of the constant interest in me due to my... ability, but I am not a psychological study.”

“I wasn’t my intention to persuade you into becoming one; I apologize if my motives were misunderstood. “

“What exactly *are* your motives, Dr. Lecter?” Will couldn’t quite bring himself to call the man by his first name, not if their conversation seemed so awfully much like a therapy session. The doctor smiled.

“This is a simple conversation, Will. Why do you suspect hidden motives?”

“People don’t have ‘simple conversations’ with me, especially not psychiatrists.”

Dr. Lecter furrowed his brow.

“That brings us back to prejudice.” he mused and took a shiny yellow star fruit from the shelf in front of them to examine it scrutinizingly.

“There is a thin line between experience and prejudice.” Will retorted and tried to remember how long they had been standing there.

“If you project your past experiences onto the present, they become prejudices.”

“Precautions.” Will corrected.

“Precautions against the past?” the doctor asked. Whatever test it had been put through, the star fruit must have passed and landed in the dark wooden basket Hannibal was carrying.

“Against a possible future outcome.”

“If one lets their past direct their present, they can never truly liberate themselves from it.”

“And if one doesn’t, history will simply repeat itself.” Will finally brought himself to glance at his watch and was shocked when he realized they had been talking for almost an hour.

“I’m sorry, Dr. Lecter, I have to go. It was a pleasure meeting you. Again.” he said with a small smile and extended his hand.

“A pleasure indeed.” the doctor replied at length and returned the smile as he shook Will’s hand.

Again, Will had the feeling he was holding it just the split of a second longer than what was usual and found that he didn’t mind. He didn’t mind *at all*. While he had felt on edge earlier he was fascinated by his conversational partner now, even more than he had been when he had known nothing but his name. The doctor was different from anyone he had ever met. When the strong, warm hand let go of his he perceived it as a loss and quickly reached for a fruit, *any* fruit, to occupy his hand otherwise.

Back in his car he realized the smile he had given Hannibal upon their good bye still hadn’t left his face.

Chapter End Notes

If you wanna see Will in a tuxedo clap your hands!

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The woman had had lung cancer, making the flesh inedible, but he had already smelled that when she had been sitting in Phillip's Bay on the table opposite. She had been talking on the phone with an inappropriately high volume for a restaurant, but the thing that had settled her fate was the fact that she had been way *too* interested in his and Bedelia's conversation about Will Graham.

Will Graham.

Hannibal had heard a lot about the young man, but he refused to let anyone taint his perception of a person before he had met them himself. Knowing his background, he had already expected the man to be reluctant and introverted.

What he hadn't been expecting was the fact that he also was **dangerously beautiful**. His dark curls and his pale, porcelain skin alone reminded of a renaissance painting of an angel, but it wasn't just that, not just that *by far*. His plush, delicate lips, his lithe frame, and especially his big, wild eyes; blue and restless like the ocean during a storm.

The man was *exquisite*, and Hannibal had always had a taste for the exquisite, for the beautiful. Will Graham was the very definition of both.

The only thing more fascinating than his sight to behold was his mind. The short conversation he had held with Will had left him starving, starving for more. There was nothing to compare Will's mind to. He was equally philosopher and minimalist, moralizer and monster. Hannibal saw all that after catching only a glimpse. There was so much more to be discovered, so much more, deep down under the stormy blue surface. Will's eyes didn't only resemble the ocean in their color, they also did in their depth, their mysteriousness and the simple fact that one could drown in them.

The woman had finally stopped squirming. Her pathetic sobbing had been distracting Hannibal from his wonderful thoughts, and he had almost regretted not killing her before gutting her. After brief consideration he took her liver and a calf, leaving the defective lungs where they were. The sweet and well-known scent of death and warm blood slowly replaced the unpleasant stink of fear and Hannibal bent down to inhale deeply before putting his souvenirs in the little freezer and retiring to his car.

Will's scent. It was exactly as addicting as his sight and his mind. Maybe even more. For the first time in his life, Dr. Lecter found himself at a loss of words. There simply were no words to describe the intoxicating scent of the young man who clung to Hannibal's thoughts like the woman had tried to cling to her life. It truly was a pity that the doctor hadn't known Will when the man had still had untreated encephalitis. During Will's hospitalization after the rapist-case, they had discovered the inflammation more or less by accident. Hannibal could

only imagine how breathtaking Will's already stunning scent must have been when the sweet, stinging flames had still mixed with it.

Though the Chesapeake Ripper was still collected and calm, Hannibal had hardly ever felt so out of control in his life. He had talked to Will less than an hour and known him for barely two weeks but the man worked like a drug. The doctor felt helpless and even during killing the Ripper's latest victim just now, his thoughts had been with those amazing blue eyes. He *needed* to see them again. Hannibal frowned at himself. He felt like he had found a new obsession, so much stronger and so much more dangerous than any other he had ever had.

Will Graham was different from anyone he had ever met.

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The Ripper strikes again

Yesterday, at approximately 9 p.m., Louisa Winter (37) was found dead in her house in Baltimore. Reliable sources claim her liver along with her left calf were missing. The woman was discovered after a neighbor had noticed the smell.

Is she another victim of the vicious Chesapeake Ripper, the killer who has been haunting our city for far too long? Special Agent Jack Crawford (picture right), head of the Behavioral Analysis Unit of the FBI, seems puzzled with the cruelty and the meticulousness of the crime. He refused to comment on the possibility that this is yet another Ripper-murder.

Will the FBI ever catch this phantom of Baltimore? Do they stand a chance against his terrifying skills?

According to Agent Bolten (real name withheld), the Bureau has considered consulting William Graham, the former homicide detective who can think like a killer, on the Ripper case for a long time but so far he hasn't agreed to help them.

After a knife attack earlier this year that had almost cost his life, Graham gave up his job at the Baltimore PD. Rumor has it he was armed when the Singe Strangler ([read more](#)) attacked him, but the detective couldn't bring himself to shoot.

Could it be that Will Graham was working with the Strangler? What sort of help does the FBI expect from a possible criminal?

Will they ever be able to catch the Chesapeake Ripper?

Get all the answers here- and only here- on [Tattlecrime](#).

(Freddie Lounds, July 25th 2014)

With a sigh Will closed his laptop. He should know better than to keep reading Lounds' articles, all they ever did was make him thirst for whiskey.

He had no idea where she had gotten this information, but Jack Crawford had, in fact, contacted him a few times about the Ripper. Will had never read the emails or listened to the voicemails. He knew once he would, his conscience would leave him no other choice than to consult with them. His ability was also a responsibility. Ignoring the fact the FBI even existed made it easier.

Not listening to the question made it easier to say 'no'.

He had to say no. His empathy had already almost cost him his life once, he was not about to let that happen again, and neither was Alana. He knew she'd probably kill him herself if he'd ever accept another one of Crawford's offers again.

"Will, don't just sit there, we have to get section A ready!" Bev yelled at him from the other side of the restaurant. He quickly put his laptop in his bag and went to the drawer to get the silken, grey table cloths.

"There's been another murder." he muttered while they spread the fabric over the first table. Beverly knitted her brows.

"Is it the Ripper?" she asked and tugged at the cloth until it was equal and uncreased.

"Freddie Lounds seems to think so."

"Freddie Lounds also thinks you've been working with a serial rapist." Bev retorted wryly.

Will kept silent and started to place the table setting on the smooth surface carefully. One of the things he liked about Beverly was that she never made him feel like something fragile and damaged. She said what she thought, and he was thankful for it. He didn't need pity or kid gloves, and she seemed to get that.

To both their relief it was a rather quiet evening. It was Wednesday, always the calmest day in Phillip's Bay. At least until 7:30p.m. Until an unexpected guest came.

Will was in the middle of preparing a new set for table 3 when he saw Hannibal entering. The man didn't seem to notice him yet and followed Price to a table in section C. Will let out a breath, both relieved and disappointed; C was one of Bev's sections. Dr. Lecter said something to Jimmy, and although they were out of earshot, Will felt like he could hear the calm, polite words Hannibal spoke to the maître. Jimmy nodded a bit surprised and turn to lead Hannibal into section A.

Will's section.

The young man pursed his lips and tried to focus on the knife he was polishing. Will had no doubt Hannibal could have memorized which tables he was responsible for when he had been here with Dr. DuMaurier.

“Sir, table 5!” one of his Commis said and Will nodded and handed him the knife and the cloth to continue the task. When he approached Hannibal’s table he felt his stomach drop and it didn’t stop dropping.

“Hello, Dr. Lecter.” he said and succeeded in keeping his voice straight and his hands from shaking as he handed the man the menu.

“Hello, Will.” he said and looked up with smile, the words leaving his mouth a few seconds before their eyes met. Will wondered if he had recognized him by his voice or if he had *really* picked this section for a reason and had been expecting him. All of a sudden it felt like the tables had turned and Will was Hannibal’s guest, in a way. He only realized he had been tracing the pattern of his scar through the fabric of his shirt when he saw the slightest movement in Hannibal’s eyes as they monitored his motions. Will quickly dropped his hand. Hannibal cleared his throat.

“One might interpret your tendency to brush over your scar as a sign of discomfort.” he remarked. “Are you under stress, Will?” He asked the question so evenly it sounded more like a statement.

“Are you here to dine or to psychoanalyze your waiter?” Will answered, a little sharper than he had intended.

“Increasingly exasperated behavior can also be a sign of distress.” Hannibal mused and tapped his fingers against the menu rhythmically.

“It can also be a sign of increasingly exasperating behavior of someone else.” Will retorted and Hannibal smiled in response, without looking up from the menu.

“What wine can you recommend?” Hannibal asked with a light tone. Will grinned.

“I somehow find it hard to believe that *you* would be in need of a recommendation.”

“Do you remember our talk about prejudice?”

“Not a prejudice, Dr. Lecter. A simple observation.”

After all, he hadn’t even looked at the wine list when he had been here three weeks prior. Will couldn’t help but feel a little triumphant when Hannibal ordered a noble red wine, again without sparing a glance at the wine list.

When the family on table 12 ordered, Will was distracted for a bit. He didn’t do well with kids as it was, and these two were especially...lively. The young waiter felt annoyed at the parents for bringing small children to Phillip’s bay, it really wasn’t the place and he was quite sure the kids would have been happier with McDonald’s anyway.

“I don’t wanna eat fish!” the girl yelled for the third time, while the boy was playing rocket with a fork.

“Then you’ll get nothing to eat, Lizzy!” the mother said unnerved and darted her husband a helpless gaze.

“Ma’am, I can come back later, if you want.” Will said, making an effort to keep his voice calm.

“No. Elizabeth has to learn that she can’t always get what she wants.” the father said with a stern voice, speaking to his wife and his daughter. Will suppressed a sigh and was glad to leave the table when the father finally ordered –fish, needless to say-.

When he turned around he caught Hannibal’s amused smile and realized the man had been watching him. With the revelation a heavy nervousness hit him, but at the same time a warm, jubilant feeling settled in his stomach. He quickly went to fetch the wine, since his encounter on table 12 had taken longer than expected and he didn’t want to leave Hannibal waiting.

When he brought the beverage to the table, he was glad his hands were steady enough to guide the bottle opener with fluid, confident movements. He felt Hannibal’s gaze on him but resisted to look up until the wine was open and the cork was on the small plate next to him. He walked around the table and placed the plate next to the doctor. When he returned to the dumb waiter and took the bottle to wipe over the bottleneck with a silken white napkin, he watched how Hannibal raised the plate slightly to scent the cork. Will waited until the doctor nodded in his direction and walked around the table again, to stand behind Hannibal’s right shoulder. When he leaned over him to pour the wine into his glass, he felt the heat of Hannibal’s body radiating against his and had to fight urge to lean closer. They were almost touching and now Will’s hand did shake, though luckily not enough to spill the wine. Still, he was sure Hannibal had noticed. He forced himself to focus on the dark red wine that smoothed itself over the inside of the glass, crimson fluid, just a hint too clear to be blood.

“Thank you.” Hannibal murmured in a low voice, and Will stood close enough to feel the vibration of his words under his skin. The doctor’s accent seemed heavier all of a sudden and Will felt his stomach drop again. When he pulled back and placed the bottle in the cooler next to the table, he let out a soft breath he hadn’t known he had been holding back. It felt like the parts of his body, that had been *so close* to Hannibal’s, were burning and he was almost surprised to look down and see his clothes weren’t on fire. He walked back to his place next to the kitchen window, his legs moving automatically; he didn’t even really feel them.

The food for table 12 came and Will didn’t have much energy to care about the protesting cry of the girl. All he felt was the burning ghost of Hannibal’s warmth, still caressing his skin.

When he glanced at the man again he made the mistake to look him directly in the eyes. The deep calm maroon, that turned out to have elements of olive and even crimson on closer examination, captured his eyes and didn’t let them go. He felt like he was being consumed by those eyes, and noticed he was unable to move. The eyes were holding him in place, trapping him. Hannibal raised his glass to his lips, his gaze still fixing on Will, his eyes pouring into the younger man’s. When he set the glass down, a drop of red liquid landed on his lower lip and, *god*, Will wanted to lick it off. The young man watched mesmerized as Hannibal did *just that*, his eyes still not allowing Will to look away. The waiter swallowed heavily and desperately hoped the motion was hidden by his collar. Going by the flash that ghosted through Hannibal’s eyes it wasn’t. Suddenly Beverly appeared beside him and the spell was broken, Hannibal’s flaming eyes were releasing his. Will quickly blinked away.

“What are you staring at?” Bev asked slightly amused and looked into the direction Will’s gaze had been lingering in curiously.

“Nothing.” Will replied quickly, but Beverly had already made out Hannibal at table 5 and grinned.

“ ‘Nothing’ is handsome.” she remarked and her grin even widened when Will immediately dropped his gaze completely.

About twenty minutes later, in which Will had managed to not look at Hannibal even once, she was by his side again, with the same grin as before.

“I think ‘nothing’ wants to pay.” she said with a small chuckle and gave Will an encouraging push. When Will approached the table, Hannibal was watching his every move but Will didn’t dare to meet his eyes again. When he took the empty plate from the table he forced himself to remember that this was just a normal situation. He was a waiter. Hannibal was a guest.

“Did you enjoy your meal?”

Hannibal smiled, but this time only with his eyes and nodded thoughtfully.

“I did. But I must mention; the meat was slightly overcooked.”

“I will inform the chef.” Will muttered and turned to leave but Hannibal caught him by his wrist, his thumb slipping beneath Will’s sleeve and brushing bare skin. With difficulty, Will suppressed a shiver.

“That won’t be necessary. I’m very careful about what I put into my body, which means I end up preparing most meals myself. I usually don’t attend my dinners in restaurants.” Hannibal said, holding Will’s wrist for a moment longer before slowly withdrawing his hand.

“You do today.” Will remarked and resisted the urge to rub his wrist where Hannibal had touched his skin.

“On rare occasions one has to make exceptions. To broaden their mind, remember?” Hannibal said and motioned to the empty chair on his left invitingly. “Please, sit Will. If I have observed correctly all your sections are empty.”

Although Will knew Hannibal was right he threw a look around and hesitated a long moment before he set the plate in his hands on another table and sat down slowly.

“And what occasion would that be in tonight’s case?” Will asked warily. He was close to Hannibal again, although not as close as before, but he could still feel the other man’s warmth seeping into him. The last guest had left and Beverly looked at them for a moment, hesitating, before proceeding to the kitchen to get the leftovers as usual, only this time she went inside to eat in the kitchen with Zeller, leaving Will and Hannibal completely alone in the dim lights of the elegant room. Hannibal didn’t look around but Will knew that he knew they were alone. The doctor smiled and poured Will a glass of the wine. He raised his own

glass slightly and looked at the man next to him. Will's gaze riveted on the wine bottle, avoiding to return the stare.

"To new acquaintances." Hannibal said and took a sip from the wine. Will mirrored his actions and had to force himself to not take a gulp, but a sip.

"The last time we met you told me you apprehend history to repeat itself. Do people usually take advantage of you?" Hannibal asked after a few moments went by in silence.

"Not of me. Of my mind." Will said and took another sip.

"I assure you that is not my intention." Hannibal answered and Will wondered what his intention was.

"Isn't that every psychiatrist's intention?"

"You seem to have a general repulsion against people within this scope."

"Yea, well 'people within this scope' have given me enough reason to." Will grunted and couldn't stop himself this time from taking a hasty gulp of the wine. Hannibal's expression lingered somewhere between a frown and amusement when he reached out and curled his fingers around Will's to slowly guide the glass down. Will wanted to flinch from the touch but that would have meant letting the wine glass drop. When it was placed on the table Hannibal didn't withdraw his hand and they sat, Will clutching at the glass and doing his best to ignore the electrifying hand on his.

"Your mind is unique in its manner to perceive and understand human behavior. I believe a certain professional curiosity is natural."

"There's a bird called Kingfisher." Will said at length. "It's believed to be one of the most peaceful animals on earth. That doesn't mean it's *natural* for predators to hunt it." When he was 7 years old, Will had found a wounded Kingfisher. He had brought the bird home and tried to nurse it back to health, but it had died the same night.

"Do you think of yourself as prey, Will?" The doctor's hand still covered Will's. The young man was slowly getting used to the feeling of a warm fingers curling around his and started to enjoy it. Just that moment, Hannibal withdrew his hand.

"Not as prey... if anything as lure. I seem to tempt people to close in on me." Will said bitterly. Hannibal's face betrayed a small smile and he took another sip of the wine before replying.

"I read about you on Tattlecrime this morning." he said in a light, conversational manner.

"Tattlecrime?? You read that stuff?" Will huffed and toyed with the glass in his hand.

"Freddie Lounds is an intelligent woman, but her articles are atrocious and lack of truth. I wouldn't usually read them but curiosity got the best of me." Hannibal answered. It was always entertaining for him to read speculations about the Chesapeake Ripper and sometimes

it provided him with possible future targets, should the article be too offending to not take action.

“How do you know Ms. Lounds?” Will asked and made no secret about his despise for the woman in his voice.

“A patient of mine recently deceased. She came to my office in the hope of getting insight on his therapy.”

“Freddie Lounds is a criminal journalist. Was your patient murdered?”

“She seemed convinced he was.”

With a glance at the clock Will realized they had been talking for almost two hours. Beverly and Zeller were long gone, he hadn’t even noticed them leaving, but the kitchen was dark.

“She’s *convinced* of a lot of things.” he muttered vaguely and rose from his seat. “It’s getting late...” he stressed and collected the now empty wine bottle. Hannibal stood up too.

“Of course. I must have lost track of time, I apologize.”

“No, it was... It was nice.” Will answered and dropped his gaze while he balanced the glasses and the plate and carried them to the kitchen window. When he turned around Hannibal was adjusting his coat and approaching the door. Before he exited, he smiled at Will.

“It has been a pleasure talking to you, Will. I do hope we’ll meet again soon.”

Will just nodded and watched how the man stepped out into the night. He leaned against the side board and tried to sort out what exactly he felt. It was pointless; too many emotions were rushing through him and the only consistencies in his thoughts were Hannibal’s eyes.

Chapter End Notes

Mmmh, pouring wine suddenly got so much hotter...

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The following week, Hannibal came to Phillip's Bay every evening. He never ordered anything to eat; he just sat on table 5, sipped his wine and watched Will. It became a sort of ritual between the two to share some drinks after the restaurant had closed and often they talked until long after midnight. One day, the sun was already rising when Will left the restaurant and the thought that he had spent the entire night with Hannibal made him feel almost *euphoric*.

Of course, knowing Will Graham's luck, that didn't last long. Exactly one week after the ominous article had appeared on Tattlecrime, Jack Crawford walked into Phillip's Bay. It was just after noon and Will was polishing glasses and talking to Hannibal, who had surprisingly shown up an hour ago since he had a patient in the evening. Though they never actually arranged the meetings, it felt like a settled appointment. It didn't seem to bother Hannibal that the restaurant wasn't open yet, ultimately proving that Will seemed to be the only reason he kept coming. Will's coworkers didn't seem to mind and neither did he, so he was engrossed in conversation with the doctor when Jack entered the venue. He briefly talked to Price and went over to Will, about to say something when he recognized Hannibal.

"Dr. Lecter, what a surprise! I wasn't aware you and Will knew each other."

Will startled when he heard his voice and abruptly turned around. He had known Jack for quite a while now and the man had never given up on asking him to come in when a case was especially complex. But he had left that life behind; that was the whole reason he was standing here, polishing glasses. He wasn't even surprised that Jack seemed to know Hannibal, somehow everyone knew Hannibal.

"What do you want, Jack?" Will asked sharply and noticed how his body tensed. Hannibal noticed too and placed a steadying hand on the small of Will's back, just so that the motion was hidden from Jack's eyes. At first, Will had taken mental note of every time Hannibal touched him, but meanwhile he was somewhat used to it, and it was strangely soothing in this situation.

"The Ripper's latest victim, Louisa Winter came here the evening before she was killed." Jack stated and looked around. It was almost ridiculous to expect Will to be satisfied with this answer.

"And that is the *only* reason you're here." Will stated dryly.

Jack eyed him and cleared his throat.

"Well, no. Listen, Will, we need-"

"I'm not interested."

Jack frowned.

“Will, we both know the case will go cold again in a few weeks, and then we’ll have nothing. If we have any chance of catching the Ripper...it’s you.”

Hannibal’s face remained stoic but on the inside a pleased smile was settling.

“Jack, the last time you needed me I almost died.” Will said and even he could hear the pleading undertone in his voice. Jack was here, the question had been asked. It was too late to say no. He couldn’t. Not if people might die if he did. Jack’s eyes betrayed that he sensed the victory and handed Will the file he had been carrying.

Normally, Hannibal would have stepped in that moment. If it was any other case. He knew how bad the fieldwork would be for Will and he wanted the man all to himself. He was trying to build something up; to make the empath trust him after all. Until he would be all Will had. Until Will would be completely dependent.

But this wasn’t any case. It was the Chesapeake Ripper. It was his chance to get into Will’s head in so many more ways than he ever could with his mask on. He knew that he probably should step in *especially* because it was the Ripper-case. Jack was right. If anyone had a chance to catch him, it was Will. Still, the thought of Will joining the delightful little foxhunt, the thought of finally having an equal playing partner aroused an appetite for risk in the doctor.

“I’ll take a look at it...” Will said weakly. He had been defeated by his own conscience. There was no turning back now. He had started walking down a long, one-way path. Again. His fingers brushed over his scar and didn’t stop until Jack was out of sight and Hannibal caught his wrist gently.

Will looked up startled, as if he had forgotten the man was even there.

“A really unfortunate habit. An opponent could see you are distressed instantly.” Hannibal said softly and traced up Will’s index finger with his thumb.

“If an opponent thinks I am distressed he might think himself safe and make a mistake.” Will said, barely listening to his own words. Part of his brain was occupied with what he had just agreed to and the other part was desperately trying to process the feeling of Hannibal’s finger slowly stroking over his skin.

“He might also see your distress for what it is and checkmate you.”

Will blinked up at Hannibal and withdrew his hand.

“And what *is* my distress, in your opinion?”

“Fear.”

Will huffed out a sharp laugh.

“Fear? I’d say if I was scared of my opponent, I would have already lost.”

“I wasn’t referring to the opponent. You fear yourself.” Hannibal answered calmly. “You fear your own mind and the places it allows you to go.”

“Don’t psychoanalyze me, *Dr. Lecter*.” Will hissed under his breath and turned his back to Hannibal to return to the glasses with shaking hands. He didn’t want anyone in his brain. *Anyone*.

He knew his reaction had only proven Hannibal was right. Not that he would have needed any confirmation.

*

Even though he had had an appointment, Hannibal came again in the evening. It was already late and Will was the only one still there. He tried to persuade himself that he had stayed longer because he wanted to get some work done in advance, not because he had been waiting for Hannibal in the hope he might come regardless of the time. Will was standing by the side board and absentmindedly folded table cloths. It was past midnight and the only noises were the occasional passing cars that resonated as muffled purrs inside Phillip’s and the soft sound of the radio in the background. It was some classical piece, nothing Will would have normally listened to, but he was lost too deep in thought to care.

“Woers of favor, Strauss II.” Hannibal’s voice said somewhere behind him.

Will startled a bit but kept focused on the table cloths in front of him.

“I shouldn’t be surprised you’re a waltz-enthusiast. It fits the image.” he replied and heard Hannibal approaching from behind.

“A waltz contains a lot of aspects one finds in life.” Hannibal mused. “Some people might even compare the concept of waiting tables to dancing.” he added and Will couldn’t suppress a smile since he had thought the exact same thing a few weeks earlier.

“That would suggest that either the guest or the waiter leads the dance.” he said and put down the cloth to face Hannibal. “They don’t. It’s a mutual exchange. Equals.”

“Mutual exchange does not necessarily imply equality between the involved parties.” Hannibal said and paused to listen to the music for a while. “I am, for instance, quite sure that the intelligence of many of your guests does not equal yours.”

“Are you saying you think I’m overqualified?” Will asked sarcastically.

“Are you not?” Hannibal replied. Will became silent and returned his attention to the table cloths.

“Jack Crawford seems to think you’re qualified to catch the Chesapeake Ripper.” Hannibal remarked, carefully approaching the subject they had been *dancing* around.

“He thought the same about the Singe Strangler.”

Hannibal furrowed his brow.

“Michael Wiss *was* imprisoned.” Hannibal argued, already knowing what Will’s answer was going to be.

“Yes, after he almost stabbed me to death. Maybe I’m no better at the figurative dance than I am at actual dancing.” Will said dryly. His hand rose to reach for his scar again but this time he stopped himself and dropped it halfway.

The room was quiet except for the faint music for a moment. Suddenly Hannibal slid his arm around Will’s waist and pulled him away from the side board. Will wanted to pull back but Hannibal’s arm was firm around his waist and his free hand reached for Will’s, holding it up a little below the height of their shoulders. Hannibal instructed where to put his other hand and Will complied. So much for ‘equals’.

Moments later they were hovering through the dim lights of the restaurant, Hannibal leading the dance, gentle and confident. No, Will wasn’t surprised that the doctor was such a good dancer. What did surprise him though was that, with Hannibal’s instructions and lead, it suddenly seemed easy to mirror his actions. Still, Will’s gaze lingered on their feet, not only to get the steps right but mostly because Hannibal was dangerously close and the last thing he needed right now were these disarming eyes. They turned and floated around the tables with grace and Will was starting to feel drowsy. Their surroundings faded until there were just the two of them on an empty planet. When the piece of music was over they stopped and complete silence fell upon the room. Hannibal still pressed Will close to his body but he let go of his hand to tip up his chin instead and forced the younger man to meet his eyes. For a few intense moments they just stood like this, Hannibal’s arm around Will’s waist, Will’s hand on Hannibal’s shoulder, three of Hannibal’s finger pads softly holding Will’s chin up. Their faces close. Their eyes locked. Melting together. Staring into each other, trying to see what the other held so well hidden behind his eyes. Gazing into the abyss. Into the depths of the other’s secret darkness.

Will’s heart was racing. They were close enough for him to feel Hannibal’s exhales on his upper lip. From this proximity the doctor’s eyes seemed redder than Will had noticed before. They had a color unlike any other eye-color he had ever seen, but if he’d have to describe it in words he would have probably said copper. Shiny, smooth copper, coated with dark olive juice. Will didn’t know how long the moment lasted but he knew it was over too soon when Hannibal suddenly pulled back and casually sat down on table 5 as if nothing had happened. Will realized he hadn’t been breathing and struggled to keep from gasping. Once his breath was somewhat even, he fetched a bottle of wine and sat down next to Hannibal.

“Jack is willing to lose you over catching the Ripper; even if just in his subconscious mind. Are you willing to lose yourself, Will?” Hannibal asked, picking their previous conversation up as if the dance had never taken place.

“I’m not sure I don’t already have.” Will admitted, too distracted by everything that had just happened to keep his reluctance up. “I’m a goddamn waiter.” he pointed out dismissively.

Hannibal smiled mildly and took a sip from the wine. Outside, the first streak of daylight appeared on the horizon. Both of them stared at the sunrise for a while.

“You must allow me to cook for you some time.” Hannibal suddenly said. Will didn’t look at him but his voice betrayed his smile, causing Will to smile as well.

*

“Hannibal Lecter? Yes, of course. You could say he used to be my mentor. Why?” Alana looked at Will in surprise. They were sitting on his porch, watching the dogs chase through the woods.

“Just asking... He’s been coming to Phillip’s a lot lately...” Will muttered.

“Sounds so unlike Hannibal. He doesn’t do restaurants.” Alana said, seeming half amused and half shocked, but Will had picked something else up. She couldn’t fool him; it was ridiculous she even tried.

“Beverly told you, didn’t she?” he asked and quirked one eyebrow. Alana sighed and tried to hide her grin behind the coffee cup she was holding.

“Maybe a word or two.” she admitted. “I’m not surprised you two would get along. Hannibal has been eager to meet you for quite a while.”

“You talked about me with Hannibal?” Will asked, his wary frown deepening. Alana quickly placed a soothing hand on his forearm.

“Will, the first thing every psychiatrist I meet asks me about is you. The only thing I told him, as well as all the others, is that you’ve left the life in the field behind and want to be left alone.”

Will pursed his lips. Alana was one of the only people he hadn’t pushed away yet. She was pretty much the only friend he had, but it bothered him how she was always so overcautious. He wasn’t as fragile as everyone seemed to think, but she sure treated him like he was.

“He invited me to dinner.” Will said hesitantly. Alana just smiled.

“Yes, that’s what he does. When?” she asked with a small chuckle.

“Tonight.”

“Just the two of you?” she asked, her tone decidedly *too* light.

Will paused. He didn’t like the silent implication of her words.

“Yes.” he said at length and stood up to whistle for the dogs. They rushed across the meadow, dirt and clumps swirling up beneath their paws. It was a pleasantly warm morning, not too hot and not as cold as the rainy days of the previous week. The low-hanging sun was already shining eagerly and promised a bright, soothing day.

When they left the porch Alana’s eyes caught the file Jack had brought him a few days earlier. She picked it up from the desk and stared at it.

“Will?” she asked with a serious voice. “What is this?”

Will bit his lower lip. He hadn’t been expecting her to stop by this morning and therefore hadn’t had a chance to hide the file. Although hiding it would have been weird, wouldn’t it? Like a child who had broken a vase and tried to put it back together with chewing gum before its parents would come home. He was a grown man; he could make his own decisions without needing to *hide* them.

“A file.” he answered strained.

“I can see that.” she retorted and opened the file. A gasp was audible and then a loud smack when she slammed the file back down onto the desk. “The Chesapeake Ripper?? I thought you told Jack you aren’t interested!?”

“He came to Phillip’s... People are dying, Alana, what was I supposed to do?”

“It won’t help the case if one of those people dying is *you!*” she all but shouted.

“Well, it won’t help the case either if I just sit back and do nothing.” he grunted and took the file to place it on a bookshelf. Alana shook her head and ran a hand through her hair desperately.

“Will, haven’t you learned anything from...” she trailed off and motioned at his abdomen. Will immediately felt the scar catching fire once again. He thought of what Hannibal had said and forced himself to resist running his fingers over the burning sensation.

“I have learned-“ he began and took a few steps away, turning his back on her “to shoot next time.” he muttered, his Southern accent lingering on the word ‘shoot’.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading everyone! Don't be shy, leave your thoughts, your comments always make me smile ;)

Chapter 4

Hannibal was moving around in his kitchen, confidently shifting from pan to cutting board to stove. A symphony from Brahms was playing in the background and the cannibal briefly remembered his and Will's talk about dancing. In a way, cooking also resembled a waltz. And the liver of Louisa Winter probably made for a better dancing partner than the rude woman would have at lifetimes.

Something inside Hannibal was split. Cut in two like the piece of meat in front of him. There was the part that wanted to break Will, to push him over an edge the young man had been trying to escape. To let things go as far as he could allow it and to then kill the empath and savor him through the finest of all art forms. There was the Chesapeake Ripper.

And then, there was a part that showed characteristics the Ripper should not be able to have, emotions he should not be able to feel. A part that wanted to be with Will every passing second, a part that was fascinated with his beauty and the beauty of his words, a part that wanted to savor the man in an entirely different way. There was Hannibal Lecter, who would have said, if he didn't know better, he was starting to feel. Starting to have a beating heart.

Starting to fall in love.

But he did know better.

With determined cuts he sliced the meat in equal little pieces and carefully placed them in one of the pans.

He did know better.

*

The house looked smaller from the outside. It still looked huge, but once he had stepped into it, Will realized *how* huge it truly was. The furniture was exactly how he had expected Hannibal's furniture to be and he wasn't particularly surprised by the oil paintings or the tremendous amount of books either. He stood in the hall, looked around and took the house in, while Hannibal stepped behind him to gently take his light jacket from his shoulders. Will shivered when Hannibal ran his hands up the length of his arms before he grasped the jacket and hung it in the wardrobe.

"I wasn't expecting a mansion." Will said humorlessly, desperate to say *anything*. Hannibal stepped behind him again, a lot closer than before. The doctor allowed their bodies to touch and leaned forward to inhale deeply in the crook of Will's neck.

"It's quiet." Will added stifled, his entire body tense.

"I can see why that would appeal to you." Hannibal murmured against his skin and let his breath ghost over Will's entire neck, up to his jawline before he pulled back to lead Will into the kitchen.

“You’re early; I hope you won’t mind waiting a little longer. The meat is not yet done.” Hannibal said and began stirring in one of the pans. Will shook his head and looked around in the kitchen. It was about as big as his living room and he briefly wondered how much the psychiatrist earned in a month. The smell in the kitchen was breathtaking and made Will’s mouth water. Almost as much as the sight of Hannibal moving around in the kitchen graceful as a swan. Will remembered their talk about dancing too as he watched how Hannibal’s muscles flexed and tensed under the fabric of his shirt. For a second Will imagined what it would be like to look at it without fabric blocking the sight. He quickly blinked those thoughts away, they had no business being in his head, especially not when the object in question was standing mere footsteps away.

“I would ask if I can help with anything, but I’m a waiter instead of a chef for a reason.” Will said sarcastically and raised his left hand, showing the patch from where he had accidentally cut his finger two days ago. Hannibal smiled and took a few steps closer. He took Will’s hand in his and removed the Band-Aid to examine the cut while he replied.

“No one is born a master.” Hannibal frowned at the grim looking cut. “Did you disinfect the wound?” he asked and let go of Will’s hand to get a medical kit.

“It’s barely a scratch...” Will argued weakly while Hannibal wiped over the cut with a soaked cotton pad. It stung and Will involuntarily curled his fingers around Hannibal’s hand to squeeze tightly as the disinfectant seeped into the wound. Maybe the cut had been deeper than Will had realized. Hannibal placed a fresh Band-Aid on it and guided the hand to his face to press a light kiss to the spot. His lips were gone again so quick that Will wasn’t sure if he hadn’t just imagined them on his skin.

“You must take better care of yourself, Will.” Hannibal murmured, holding Will’s hand for a moment longer to emphasize his words and then returned to his pans.

“It’s not my fault knives seem to be attracted to my skin.” Will answered and realized he was scratching his scar again. He quickly dropped his hand before Hannibal turned around, but he knew that the man had somehow seen it anyway.

“Have you ever considered that it may be your skin that is attracted to knives?” Hannibal answered and took off the apron he was wearing to fold it neatly and put it on the counter. Will realized how little Hannibal was wearing for his means; the jacket of his three piece suit draped around a chair and his sleeves rolled up, exposing muscular, tanned forearms. Will swallowed and tried to look away from the bare skin, the flexing muscles, the prominent veins.

“Sometimes.” Will answered vaguely. He knew he had a high tolerance for danger. He knew that, even if he’d never admit it, he was attracted to danger. Hannibal stayed silent and just looked at Will, leaning against the counter opposite.

“When I...” Will sighed, realizing that Hannibal had the exact same look on his face his school psychiatrist had always had, usually seconds before the question ‘Would you like to talk about it’ came. Dr. Stamson had been his name, and he was the only psychiatrist Will had ever been to. He didn’t like the look, but some part of him found that he actually wouldn’t

mind talking to Hannibal. About all the things he always kept inside. He felt like he could trust Hannibal with them, like he would understand.

“When I woke up in the hospital... The first thing they told me was that it’s a miracle I’m still alive.”

“You sound like you disagree.”

“I find it hard to see anything that happened with Michael Wiss as a *miracle*.”

“What happened, Will?”

“You know what happened. You’ve read the articles, seen the news... Every reporter in the state has been writing about me.”

“And who was there that night in the shed? You or them?”

Will swallowed and realized he’d been clutching at the edge of the kitchen island. He let go and started pacing around in the kitchen until he slumped on the leather chair in the corner. Will closed his eyes and rubbed a hand across his forehead.

“Jack brought me in after the third victim. Like all the others, she was...of unsound mind. Traumatized to the extent of radical PTSD. It was clear the abuser wouldn’t stick to raping, she had numerous cuts and cigarette burns and her neck showed signs of strangulation. She was half starved to death, the only content in her stomach being cherries. They also found cherry blossoms on what was left on her clothing. Starvation, rape, flesh wounds. He had tortured her, a sexual sadist getting a taste for blood, so it wasn’t exactly a surprise his next victim was dead when we found her. Jack wanted to look for a connection between the women, but I told him there wouldn’t be one. Wiss didn’t care who, it was only essential *how*. Jack didn’t listen so while they were *wasting time* I talked to the witnesses again.” Will paused and opened his eyes. His hand was covering his scar, almost protectively but this time he didn’t care to drop it. Hannibal was still leaning against the counter and stared at him, his expression not readable. Will continued talking with his eyes open, his gaze riveted on the shiny fridge.

“Michael Wiss worked as a bartender in the venue the second victim went the night she was abducted. When I got to his address I knew. It was isolated, he lived alone, the house had a basement- all key elements of our profile. Plus his garden was full of cherry trees. I left Jack a voicemail and went in.” Will paused again and thought about what had happened inside the house. He hadn’t talked about it since he had given the report to Jack. And he had *never* talked about his emotions regarding it.

“When... when I pointed my gun at him, I saw it through his eyes. I’d been in his head the entire week so it was easy to slip into his mind then. It was just... a moment of hesitation but it was enough for him to make his move. Just before he stabbed me, I snapped back.”

Will stopped talking and Hannibal realized he had gotten lost in the memory.

“And what did you feel, back in your own mentality?” he asked softly. Will squeezed his eyes shut.

“Power. I felt a rush of power. Just before I felt the knife. Then it was pain. And regret. Regret I didn’t kill him. Regret I didn’t-“ Will’s eyes flew open and he spat out his next words full of self-loathing. “- *take the chance.*”

The short silence that followed was interrupted by the beeping noise the stove made, signaling that the meat was done. Will helped Hannibal carry the plates to the mahogany table without saying another word. When he sat down, Hannibal poured them both a glass of wine. I felt weird, Hannibal serving Will for once.

“You regret not killing Michael Wiss. Tell me, Will; if you were to stand in that shed again, would you pull the trigger?”

“I often dream about doing it. Killing him.” Will muttered and stared down at his plate. His knee brushed against Hannibal’s thigh as the doctor sat down. Hannibal looked at him interested, curious.

“Dreams can reveal suppressed desires.” he remarked and took a first bite of Louisa’s liver. Will mirrored his actions and picked up his fork.

“Or suppressed fears.” he replied. The meat was soft and warm inside his mouth. It tasted better than anything Will had ever eaten and coming from someone who worked at Phillip’s Bay that said a lot. He realized Hannibal was watching him expectantly.

“It’s delicious.” the young man said with a stunned smile. Hannibal smiled too, satisfied.

One could get the illusion he was pleased when people complimented his cooking for the same reason any chef would be. The true reason he was pleased though, was because he felt vindicated. They were all just as guilty as he was. He got satisfaction through sharing his true self without the chosen ones knowing he was sharing. Through seeing them appreciate it. Maybe deep down he knew that was why he hadn’t stepped in when Jack asked Will to consult on the Ripper. Maybe he knew he wanted to share with the young man. Share *everything*.

After they had finished dinner they sat in the living room and picked up their old habit of emptying a wine bottle together. Will was sitting on the comfortable, expensive looking couch, while Hannibal sat down in an armchair, unbuttoning the jacket of his three piece suit as he did. Will looked around in the elegant room and stopped when he saw a painting that seemed familiar.

“*The Sin.*” he said when he recognized the painting and stood up to take a closer look at it. It was, of course, a replica but an extremely accurate one. Will tried to remember where he had seen the painting before. He didn’t even know why he knew it, but he did. Hannibal stood up too and stepped behind him, standing close enough to let Will feel his breath against his neck.

“Franz von Stuck.” Hannibal confirmed and Will swallowed heavily, feeling the other’s proximity. He stared up at the painting. A dark haired woman stared back with a blank expression, her face not showing any emotion. She might start crying any second as much as cheering. Nothing revealed what she felt about the thick, black snake that was creeping up her side and around the back of her neck to rest its head on her shoulder, except the fact that she didn’t try to shake it off. The black snake stared at Will too, its sharp teeth fletched and its glowing eyes piercing through him. He felt Hannibal’s body pressing against his as the man leaned closer and the next moment Will’s earlobe was caught between his teeth. Will’s eyelids fluttered as Hannibal gently nibbled at his flesh before releasing his earlobe and mouthing down his neck until he reached his collar. He ran his hand up Will’s sleeve and over his chest to find the first button of his shirt. He opened it blindly; his eyes closed as he briefly buried his nose in Will’s curls, and guided the fabric aside slowly to reveal the skin of Will’s right shoulder. Hannibal picked up his path again and mouthed over the crook of Will’s neck, letting his tongue brush over the skin faintly and bit down when he had finally reached the young man’s shoulder. If one would have taken a picture of them now, they would have resembled the beast and the seduced on the painting in front of them perfectly. *The Sin*.

*

An hour later, Will left the house. He was almost disappointed, the affectionate bite had been over just as unexpectedly as it had come and Hannibal had pulled back definitely too soon. Their conversation had quickly travelled back to light, harmless topics.

Will chewed on his lower lip and wondered what the hell was going on with him. Hannibal brought out an desire in him so strong it *hurt*. When he reached his small house in Wolf Trap, he slammed the door behind him and rushed past the excitedly barking dogs to his bedroom. He dropped to the mattress frustrated and stared up at the ceiling, but instead of the wooden pattern he was supposed to see, maroon eyes stared down at him. With a sigh Will tore his shirt off his body and stopped in front of the mirror to stare at the bite mark on his shoulder disconcerted. He closed his eyes and remembered Hannibal’s hot breath, his delicate lips ghosting over his neck, his teeth engraving themselves in his pale skin. When he opened his eyes again the bite on his shoulder was throbbing as if it had just been made and his erection pressed against the fabric of his pants. Will huffed, angry at himself, at his body. He laid back down and soon slid his hand down to his throbbing hardness. He was too tired and frustrated to feel ashamed, and with Hannibal’s name on his lips and the memory of his teeth on his shoulder he came, trembling and moaning.

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Freddie is being rude, Jack is being pushy and the Chesapeake Ripper is being naughty.

Chapter Notes

Hello and welcome in the HeAteUs-express. Tissues and blankets to wrap yourselves in and rock back and forth will be provided for you on request. Do not, under any circumstances, turn off your mobile devices ever. There are no emergency exists. Read as much fanfiction as you can. Please fasten your straightjackets and enjoy your stay.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Hello, Mr. Graham.”

“Ms. Lounds.”

Will stared at the woman, his body language making it quite obvious how unnerved he was that she had shown up here, again. During his first week in Phillip’s Bay, she had come almost every evening and got herself thrown out twice, since she was way more interested in asking Will indiscrete questions than actually ordering food. Freddie made a disapproving noise, but her cunning smile didn’t leave her features.

“Tsk, is that a way to greet a paying customer? Aren’t you supposed to smile?”

“What do you want?!” Will asked sharply, and they both knew he wasn’t talking about dinner.

“Is it true that you’ve decided to help the BAU on the Chesapeake Ripper-case?” The question immediately shot out of her curved, red lips.

“I’m not here to give you an interview, Freddie.”

“That wasn’t a no.” she remarked. In that moment Beverly appeared by Will’s side and darted Freddie a fiery glance.

“It wasn’t a yes either. Order something or leave.” she said, her voice not betraying the anger her eyes showed.

The red haired woman glared at Bev for a moment before she shrugged and ordered at last. Will gladly took Beverly's offer to switch sections for the night.

It was past 7:30, but Will had given up expecting anything. Hannibal hadn't come all week and Will hadn't seen him since the evening he had spent at his house. In a way, Will was glad. He had had some time to clear his thoughts and try to focus on something other than Hannibal. Like the Ripper-case. There had been another body this week. He had read through the files multiple times already, but he knew if he *really* wanted to be of any help, he'd have to see the body, the crime scene; the darkness he had once again failed to escape. As if he could read his thoughts, Jack called him just that moment. For the first time since his time as a detective had ended, Will picked up. Bev threw him a worried look from across the room. Phones were only allowed in emergencies. He quickly waved her off and disappeared into the break room.

"Jack?"

"Will, we have another body."

"Another one? But he just--"

"I know. Something has him frustrated... If we're lucky he might get careless."

"He won't."

That drew a knowing sigh from Jack.

"Will, I need you here. The crime scene is fresh, maybe--"

"I can't."

"Can't or won't?"

"I know what I agreed to, Jack. I'm working."

"It won't take long. I've already spoken to your superior."

"So this call is just a formality then? I don't actually get to choose." Will stated with a bitter bite to his tone. A deep inhale that turned into a sigh was audible through the phone before Jack answered.

"No. You don't."

Twenty minutes later Will was standing outside an abandoned barn. He did his best to fade out the eager agents, the curious reporters, the nervous, loud chatter, the vomiting officer. All so terribly familiar. He was back. Suddenly the fact that he had ever thought he could escape all this seemed ridiculous. This was who he was, even if he didn't want it. No matter how

hard he'd try, in the end, he would always end up here again. After Jack had cleared out the barn and nodded at him expectantly, Will took a deep breath and stepped in.

There was a girl, or part of a girl, lying in the middle of a wreath of straw. She was wearing a white dress, stained with blood and dust. Through the fabric of the dress one could see that her legs were missing and her abdomen was cut open. Her intestines were used to tie the wreath together and the straw was still damp with her blood. The crime scene was fresh, very fresh. Will closed his eyes and let the pendulum swing but nothing happened. He saw the same crime scene, the girl was still dead and the only thing that had changed was the giant, black stag that suddenly stood opposite, its muzzle buried in the straw. When it looked up, Will saw it hadn't been straw it had been chewing on, but the girl's gut. Blood dripped from its teeth when it opened its mouth and let out a high pitched, sharp whine. Will snapped back into reality and stared at the girl. It had been a Ripper-murder, no doubt, but something was very different. Will stepped out of the barn and walked over to Jack.

"Something happened. This was desperate, frustrated,...impatient. I don't see the control the Ripper usually has."

"So what does that mean?" Jack asked with furrowed brows.

"That something is distracting him." Will mused and stared at the barn.

"Alright, maybe we can use that to our advantage. What else did you see?"

"He attired her. The dress isn't hers. It's pure; white and innocent but tainted with her own blood."

"The Ripper wanted to taint her?"

"No..." Will said thoughtfully. "In his mind, she already was. He was merely turning her into what he saw." The young man chewed on his lower lip and felt hot, damp breath from a bloody muzzle against his neck for a moment, tainting his pale skin with a crimson spray of blood. He shivered, but if Jack noticed he chose to ignore it. Will reached up to take his glasses off and rubbed over his eyes in a desperate attempt to wipe the image that was scratching behind his eyelids away.

"In some countries it was common to force a woman to wear a straw wreath to her own wedding if she didn't guard her chastity." he muttered, his palm pressed against one eyelid.

"He killed her because she was sleeping around?" Jack asked warily, with something that could have been mistaken for an almost joking manner, were they not standing on a crime scene.

"No, he killed her because he didn't think her existence appropriate. He saw her as a..." Will paused and looked at the barn again. "...taint."

When Jack let him go, Will's shift was over and Phillip's empty. Something deep inside him wanted to call Beverly and ask if Hannibal had come and he immediately cursed himself for it. Was he really that desperate? He didn't want to let anyone in, and Hannibal had started coming dangerously close. Closer than Will cared to admit. If he was completely honest with himself, the doctor was already in his head.

Since he had left for the crime scene, Will had to do an extra evening this week. On Tuesday, usually his day off, he was standing in Phillip's Bay again, exhausted and in definite need of a break. Luckily, the evening went by quickly, and Will was distracted most of the time, so his mind could settle in a comforting blankness, a luxury he hardly ever had. After the last guests had left, he and Bev sat down and ate the leftovers. Table 5 was directly next to them, and Will tried not to stare at it. Apparently he failed. Beverly sighed.

"You know, normal people would just call," she said with furrowed brows. Will winced and tore his gaze from Table 5. He hadn't told Bev about anything that had happened with Hannibal; naturally not, but she could sense *something* had happened. Female Intuition.

"'Normal' is a term seldom used to describe me," he retorted and took a gulp from his whiskey. Bev rolled her eyes but let the topic go. Instead she asked about an equally as touchy subject.

"So, what's all that about; you helping on the Ripper-case?" she asked warily.

"I take it Alana has already told you."

Beverly nodded.

"She did, but I couldn't quite believe it. You put so much effort into leaving that life behind, and now all it takes to pull you back is a visit from Jack Crawford?"

"Beverly, if I don't do this people will die."

"People die all the time. I'm sorry, I know it sounds bad, but that's the circle of life! Sooner or later everyone meets their fate. You can't take the blame on you for every life you can't save; it's not your responsibility to save them!"

"Yes it is. If I don't, who will?"

"How about the FBI?? It's *their* job, not yours. Not anymore... You should've just told Jack to piss off."

Her words tugged the corners of Will's lips into an involuntary grin. He swallowed his answer down with another gulp. He knew there would be no point to arguing with her. Just as Alana, she was worried, but his mind was made up. He couldn't sit back and do nothing.

Bev left soon after. Tomorrow was her day off, and she and Alana were planning to drive out to the summerhouse of Bev's parents early in the morning to spend the day there, like they had so often when they were kids.

Will stayed in the restaurant a little longer. He was rearranging the salt cellars on the side board, completely lost in thought, and therefore didn't hear the door silently opening. When an arm slid around his waist he startled, but the next moment he smelled familiar cologne and turned to face Hannibal.

He wanted to say something, but the proximity of the other caught him off guard. These eyes trapped him once again, and their noses were almost touching. Without further thought, Will put his arms around Hannibal's neck and pulled him down to crash their lips together. Hannibal stiffened for a moment, but then he took a step forward and shoved Will against the wall. His hand wandered up to let his fingers thread in Will's curls and he tugged the young man's head back against the wall to get a better angle. He deepened the kiss and Will opened his mouth obediently, accommodating Hannibal's tongue and pressing his own against the muscle. Hannibal licked along the side of his tongue and Will let out a soft moan that Hannibal swallowed down while he caressed Will's hair almost frantically .

Their passionate exchange was interrupted when someone cleared their throat behind them. Will gasped when Hannibal broke the kiss and pulled back to turn and stare at the intruder. Freddie Lounds stood there, leaning against the railing between section A and section B. A smug smile was on her lips as she muttered:

"Interesting. I always wondered what happens in a restaurant after closing time."

She tapped her fingers against the railing and added:

"Not so professional, is it?"

She must've sneaked in after they closed, hidden somewhere like the parasite she was. Will was still leaning flat against the wall. He was unsure if he'd be able to stand otherwise. Hannibal took a warning step towards her and his arm slid off Will's waist as he did. Will wanted to reach for it, feeling less grounded immediately.

"You are being very rude, Ms. Lounds." he said, his voice cold and calm. The woman merely smiled and pushed herself off the railing.

"Dr. Lecter. Small world, isn't it? I believe last time we met was about Franklyn Froideveaux' death."

She smiled at Hannibal charmingly before turning to Will.

"Amazing how little it takes to break your alleged repulsion against psychiatrists."

Will took a step forward, finally trusting himself to stand and stared at her with hateful, fiery eyes.

"Leave."

It was all he said but he didn't recognize his own voice. It sounded like a sincere threat, like a deep growl an animal makes right before it attacks. Freddie's eyes widened for a moment, but

she quickly regained control over her features and gave a forced smile before she started to walk towards the door.

“Until next time.” she said lightly and finally left. She had seen enough. Everything she did, she did for information, and *what information* she had gotten tonight! She wasn’t yet sure how or when she would be able to use it, but she was confident she could use it eventually.

Will was gazing after her, his entire body trembling with rage. Hannibal carefully approached him, exactly like one would a wild animal. He came to a stop close to him, but avoided touching the young man. He knew Will would only pull back.

The cannibal was infuriated by the entire situation. Will had finally made a move; he had let the desire, the passion Hannibal had been trying to cultivate in him take control. It had gone exactly as Hannibal had planned; he had known that if he’d let the empath starve just long enough following his inconclusive actions after the dinner, he’d be ready to give himself over to his needs. He had been utmost pleased that Will didn’t just give himself over; no, he even initiated it himself. Hannibal’s efforts were bearing fruits already, but instead of finally being able to collect them; because god knows the week of withdrawal had been harder than the doctor could have imagined; instead of finally opening the first door to what would be an endless corridor of barriers to break, this false, ruthless woman had shattered everything he’d been building up to so far.

As expected, Will was upset and when he slowly calmed down a bit, he was nowhere near feeling the lustful rush he had been feeling before. When he mumbled an apology and left, Hannibal had to fight down the urge to follow the young man and simply take him with him.

When the doctor drove back to his house, his thoughts were even darker than usual. He was mostly angry at himself. One week, just *one week* of distance and he had gotten completely lost in his desires. He had neglected his own plan by killing twice in just two days for no reason. His fridge had been stocked, there had been no necessity to kill the girl, other than the fact that she had been extremely obscene with her companion during an opera performance Hannibal had been looking forward to for weeks.

That, and the fact that he was frustrated to the extent of desperation. Will’s skin had tasted *forbiddingly* delicious and his lips even more, exactly as delicate and addicting as the rest of the man, and all Hannibal could think about was to get his lips, his tongue and his teeth on that flawless, pale silk again. He had felt Will’s pulse on his tongue when he had licked over his neck, and he felt drawn in by the pulsating fluid that was streaming beneath the porcelain skin. He wanted to taste Will, to see crimson contrast against the stunning smooth skin and to hear the man whimper, not in pain, not like the girl had when Hannibal had spilled *her* blood, in *pleasure*.

He wanted to taste, to know, to savor and to please the man in every way possible.

Tsts, Freddie, being a cockblock is rude.

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Tobias plays with Hannibal's toys, Will is uncertain of his relationship with Hannibal and Freddie Lounds is being unbelievable.

Chapter Notes

This fiction destroys me at the moment, because now Will will actually have that scar on his abdomen and I just *starts crying*

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“I ordered rice as side-dish.”

The man’s voice was calm and almost friendly. Will wet his lips and picked up the plate again he had just placed in front of the guest. He knew the man hadn’t ordered rice, but this wasn’t his place to start an argument. The customer was always right. Will forced himself to smile.

“My mistake. I apologize, Mister...?”

“Budge.”

“Mister Budge.”

“No need to apologize.” The man smiled, but in a way it looked more like he was fletching his teeth. When Will walked towards the kitchen window the man’s smile turned into a grim grimace. Will Graham.

A few minutes later, Hannibal entered the restaurant. He looked around briefly to see that Will was busy with an order. Table 5 was occupied by a single person. Hannibal furrowed his brow and walked over to take the seat opposite the unwanted visitor.

“Hello, Tobias.”

“Dr. Lecter. I wasn’t aware this venue met your... eating habits.” Tobias said and lowered his voice at the last words.

“Evidently you were very aware I would be here regardless. What do you want?” Hannibal asked harshly. He usually kept his temper under control at all times, but Tobias Budge had

always been a problem and the man was clearly here for a reason. Hannibal didn't like the way he watched Will *at all*.

"Can't I just enjoy a meal? This location has been recommended to me."

With other words someone had told him this was where Will worked.

"I don't believe the menu here is suitable for you. I suggest you find a different location to enjoy your meal."

With other words leave my territory before I kill you.

"I will, Dr. Lecter. *Once the bill is paid.*" Tobias said with a sinister undertone.

With other words you take something from me, I take something from you.

"Be careful not to lose track of your expenses." Hannibal answered, carrying on Tobias' undertone.

"I'm not scared of high expenses."

"Perhaps you should be."

The two men stared at each other for a moment, a wordless, motionless power play until Tobias blinked away with a smile. A Commis put a plate, now with rice, in front of him and Tobias started eating without sparing another glance at Hannibal. The doctor stared at him for a moment longer before he averted his eyes to sought out Will. The young man was just closing a door behind him, leading to the break room. Without a second thought Hannibal rose from his seat and walked towards said room. Tobias' eyes followed him with an amused shimmer.

"Enjoy your meal, Dr. Lecter." he muttered salaciously when Hannibal walked past him. Hannibal didn't do him the favor of answering and approached the door. When he opened it and quickly slid inside, he found a small, bright room empty except for a bench, a coffee machine and a few lockers. Will was standing next to the coffee maker and turned around surprised when he heard the door. Hannibal could see a momentary darkening in the young man's eyes before he swallowed and averted his eyes to look at the coffee machine.

"Dr. Lecter." he mumbled. He remembered the previous evening and quickly pushed the memories of demanding lips on his away as the older man approached. Instead of answering, Hannibal grasped Will's hips and pulled him closer. The younger man let out a surprised gasp that was cut off when Hannibal shoved his tongue into his mouth. Will reached up to clutch at Hannibal's vest and allowed the kiss to become deeper before he assembled all his self-control to carefully push the doctor away.

"I don't think this is a good idea." he said, slightly breathless. His hands were still fisted around Hannibal's clothing and they hadn't stepped away from each other yet.

"And why is that?" Hannibal asked calmly, letting one hand slide up to sink it in Will's hair. The young man instinctively leaned into the touch but forced himself to continue resisting the

temptation.

“There’s a reason people stay away from me. A...darkness that follows me around and doesn’t let go. I don’t want to pull you into it. I’m not-“

Will was cut off when Hannibal kissed him again and this time he couldn’t bring up the strength to push him away. Instead he parted his lips and pressed himself closer. When the older man slid a leg between Will’s thighs and pressed, the empath groaned into Hannibal’s mouth and bit down on whatever flesh was currently between his lips. After a few more moments they pulled apart for air and Hannibal stroked through Will’s hair tenderly.

“I assure you I can handle your darkness, Will.” he murmured. Of course he could. He was *part of* Will’s darkness and oh; it was about to get so much darker.

Three short beeps were audible in the room, signaling that Will’s break was over and he stepped away from Hannibal.

“I can’t even handle it myself.”

“Then I’d gladly offer my assistance.”

Will averted his eyes and darted a glance at the mirror. His hair was disheveled and at some point of their kiss the knot of his bowtie had gotten ruined; the ribbon hung loosely around his neck. Before he had a chance to reach up, Hannibal took a step forward and tucked the black silk under the collar of Will’s shirt.

“I can tie it myself.” Will said defiantly, but didn’t make a move to do so. Hannibal merely smiled and focused on the silken ribbon in front of him. His knuckles brushed along Will’s jawline as he fixed the tie and he felt Will swallowing under his touch. The young man sighed and closed his eyes. He felt conflicted about saying his next words, not sure if he should say them out loud.

“Maybe I don’t want to handle it.” he muttered and felt Hannibal’s curious gaze on him. It was true. If he’d really want the darkness to stop consuming him, he’d find a way.

“Maybe...” He paused, considering his words, his eyes still shut. “Maybe I’m drawn to it.”

It was for the best Will had his eyes closed, otherwise he might have seen the excited flash that Hannibal couldn’t stop from shooting through his eyes. By the time Will timidly opened his eyes again, Hannibal had his mask back in place and the bowtie was perfectly even. The doctor ran his hands over Will’s shoulders and back to cup his cheek with one of them.

“Then maybe you should stop being so scared of it.” he murmured and traced the shape of Will’s lips with his thumb slowly. The empath shuddered and reached up to cover Hannibal’s hand with his own and slowly guided it away from his lips.

“I have to go.” It came almost as whisper and he let go of Hannibal’s hand. With an apologetic and somewhat sad look he stepped away to leave the break room.

The moment the door closed behind the young man, Hannibal felt a sharp pinch. It felt as though Will was returning to the real world, escaping their brief privacy and offering himself up to everyone out there again. It was then that it became clear to Hannibal that he didn't want to share the empath with anyone in any way. He wanted the man to be *his*, wanted to be the only one that existed for Will. He wanted to lock him away from the rest of the world, isolate him so no one could ever lay their eyes on him again. The doctor quickly pushed those thoughts away. He couldn't allow himself to feel such possessiveness. Will Graham was an invalid variable in his plan that could have to be eliminated for all kinds of reasons any time. He couldn't start getting attached to the man.

When he exited the break room and saw Will standing directly under a window; the setting sun catching his dark locks and lighting them on fire, a streak highlighting his plush lips that seemed way too red in comparison to his pale skin, and his stormy blue eyes glowing in the light, he realized it was already too late. He was more than attached, he was addicted.

Obsessed.

*

"You went to Phillip's Bay again." It was neither a question nor a statement; she was just voicing what he had been thinking, like she did so often. Bedelia looked at him, her eyes intelligent and calm.

"I did." Hannibal was surprised it felt like an admission. "I had a rather unpleasant encounter with Tobias Budge." he added at length.

Bedelia quirked one eyebrow, a small movement, almost impossible to see.

"And what about it was so unpleasant?"

"He overstepped a line, or was threatening to do so, at the very least."

"And is that *line* Will Graham?"

Hannibal cocked his head and thought for a moment.

"Will is different from anyone I have ever met."

"Is he?" she asked with a silent implication. Hannibal looked at her questioningly.

"Hannibal, why do you think you feel so drawn to Will?"

"There is unparalleled potential in him."

"You said he's different. So are you."

"Then being different is what unites us." Hannibal confirmed thoughtfully.

"What do you see in him?"

“Possibilities.”

“Hannibal, when was the last time you had romantic feelings towards someone?” Bedelia asked carefully, her tone even and calm. They both knew Hannibal wasn’t going to answer that question.

“I do not bear romantic feelings towards Will.” he said, his lips twitching.

“You may be developing them.”

“It is no unknown fact to either of us that I cannot engage in a relationship.”

“I didn’t say anything about a relationship.” she remarked.

“Then what are you suggesting?”

Bedelia sighed and leaned slightly forward.

“You go there almost every evening. If your feelings for Will Graham are not of a romantic nature, you have to consider the possibility that you might have an unhealthy obsession. Try to sort out what it is you feel before you take action.”

Bedelia was intelligent and the single person Hannibal trusted at least partly, but he couldn’t take her advice. Not this time. For once, he already had taken action and he had no intention of stopping, now that his plan was coming together. Now that he had started to seep into Will’s life both with and without his mask. Maybe it was unhealthy, because he was most definitely obsessed, but he truly didn’t care. It was all going to be worth it. Will was a beautiful ruby in the rough, and Hannibal couldn’t wait to start forming him the way he wanted.

*

“Mr. Graham!” Will jerked his head around. A familiar voice had called for him and he was torn between waiting for the approaching woman and turning around to drive away. His hand was already resting on the door handle of his car, but he decided to listen to what Freddie Lounds had to say.

“Mr. Graham.” She had ran the way to his car and her cheeks were slightly flushed. Before she continued talking she had to try to get her breathing under control. Then she cleared her throat.

“I’m sure you’re not exactly fond of me at the moment-“

“Nor have I ever been.”

She ignored his remark and kept talking.

“But I think we can work something out. In fact I’d like to make an offer.” she said with a wolfish grin.

“Whatever offer you’d like to make, the answer is *no*.” he said sharply and turned to open the door. She caught his upper arm.

“Ah- Wait until you’ve heard it.”

He withdrew from the touch harshly and crossed his arms in front of his chest. She grinned and ran a hand through her locks.

“So, I’m just gonna cut to the chase. I know you’re consulting on the Ripper-case. I want insight.”

“And what makes you think I’d agree to that?!”

“Mr. Graham, your relationship with Dr. Lecter can be interpreted in many ways. And it’s my job to find the most interesting version.”

He stared her directly in the eyes for once, his jaw clenched and his body tense.

“And what version would that be?”

“You’re currently *the* topic as far as psychology goes. Don’t think I don’t know about the buzz around you. A lot of people have been trying to get to know you-“ she paused and corrected herself. “- *your mind*.”

“What are you implying?” His voice was like the fizzling of a poisonous snake just before it bites. She smiled, seemingly unimpressed.

“Wouldn’t it just make a great story if one of them succeeded by doing nothing more than seducing *you*- the man who claims he doesn’t socialize? What a scandal that would be...”

Will drew in a sharp breath and was about to say something when she raised her hand and continued speaking.

“Now I know that Dr. Lecter is a fine man who wouldn’t do something like that just to get a study. But you’d be surprised what people are willing to believe if it they read it on the internet.”

The young man took a warning step closer, his blue eyes raging like the perfect storm. He knew very well what Lounds saw in him, and he was not above using that to scare her.

“Are you trying to blackmail me, Ms. Lounds?”

“Call it what you want. I simply made an offer.”

Will let out a sharp laugh.

“You’ve written so much about me already, what makes you think one more article full of lies will matter?”

“It might not matter to you, but think of Dr. Lecter. I could ruin his reputation.”

“I’m sorry to spoil your master plan, but I don’t have a relationship with Dr. Lecter that goes beyond the fact that he regularly comes to Phillip’s Bay-“

“Didn’t look that way” she interrupted, but he ignored it.

“-and even if I did, you’d be blackmailing the wrong person. I can’t tell you anything without Jack’s consent.”

“I get my information through all kinds of ways. Jack wouldn’t have to know you’re one of them.”

Will stared at her in disbelief for a moment and slowly shook his head. The parasite didn’t shy away from anything.

“The answer’s still no.” he muttered and reached for the car door. This time she didn’t stop him, but she extended her hand to slip her card into his chest-pocket.

“I’ll give you some time to reconsider.” she said, her cunning grin still tugging at her lips. Will didn’t deign another glance at her and got in the car to drive away.

Chapter End Notes

Jesus, Freddie, why don't you just wear a t-shirt that says "Kill me please"???

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Hannibal takes care of Will

Chapter Notes

I just wanna thank you for all the kudos and the comments, you guys have no idea how happy you make me <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Will looked up startled as two short knocks resonated through his house. He rarely ever got any visitors. Beverly was working today, Jack hadn't called and Alana had made it quite clear that she wanted him to make his first day off in two weeks of meals and murders fully about himself. He knew that only left one option and briefly considered to pretend he wasn't home. The last few days had been a game of hide and seek. He knew it was childish, he couldn't avoid Hannibal forever. Hell; he had even gone so far as to plead Bev to switch section A with him for good, as if Hannibal was somehow magically tied to table 5. Will nervously licked his lips before he took a deep breath and opened the door.

"Hello Hannibal." he muttered, his gaze riveted on the Windsor knot in front of him, desperately avoiding the other's eyes.

"Will. I can't say that your recent behavior didn't raise my concern."

The doctor's voice was serious and steady. Will realized he should probably invite him in and stepped aside.

"I know. I just... This is new for me." he said silently. Hannibal slowly closed the distance between them.

"As it is for me." he said softly. It was true. He had never felt the way he felt for Will.

The young man sighed and walked towards the living room to sit down on the couch. Hannibal followed him and took his surroundings in. For their own best, the dogs kept a respectful distance. The house was simple and practical, a little chaotic though quite domestic nonetheless. Hannibal noticed the dog hair that seemed to linger everywhere, the greasy boat motor that lay around in the middle of the living room and the remains of cheap instant meals in the trashcan, but Will's scent was heavy and intense and seemed to seep out of every

corner, so the doctor didn't care about the rest. He was completely clouded in the intoxicating smell and couldn't stop himself from inhaling deeply.

On a crowded desk he could make out the Ripper-files and walked over to take a look at them. He realized they were disheveled and spread all over the desk as well as the coffee table. The couch was rumpled and Will had dark shadows underneath his eyes. Hannibal frowned.

"Will, when was the last time you slept?"

"There's not much space for sleep on my schedule at the moment." Will huffed bitterly. When it wasn't Phillip's it was the Ripper. When it wasn't the Ripper it were nightmares.

"Then I suggest you make space. What good will it do if you collapse?" Hannibal said in a stern voice and noticed that the already pale man was currently outright white as a wall. "You need to rest, Will."

"I can't." Will said, and his voice was somewhat desperate. He looked up at Hannibal exhausted, his eyes bloodshot and the usually lively blue under a layer of tired grey. Hannibal understood and walked over to sit next to Will on the couch.

"When did your nightmares start?" he asked softly. Will buried his face in his hands and sighed deeply.

"They were always there. But I could... deal with them. Ever since I'm back in the field they're escalating. I'm..." he paused and straightened his back. His head rolled back and he stared up at the ceiling blankly. "...I'm afraid to fall asleep."

"What do you see?"

Will licked his lips and closed his eyes. Hannibal's presence calmed him.

"Michael Wiss. The Ripper's victims. Myself in the middle of a pile of bodies."

"And what is it that usually wakes you?"

Will opened his eyes again tilted his head slightly to look at Hannibal.

"A stag." he muttered. "A huge, black stag. I keep seeing it."

Hannibal cocked his head thoughtfully and regarded Will with a penetrating gaze.

"Do you feel threatened by it?"

"No. I feel like I should. But I don't."

Hannibal reached out to press his hand to Will's forehead. The man had a light fever, probably the outcome of a lack of sleep and utter exhaustion. The empath leaned into the touch; Hannibal's hand was cooling and comforting, and a pleasant tension seeped into his skin in strong waves and started fighting with his headache immediately.

“What is it that truly scares you, Will? The stag, or the fact that the monster *doesn't* scare you?”

“I don't know. I don't know what to feel anymore.” Will muttered and closed his eyes again as Hannibal stroked through his hair tenderly.

“You said you think you should feel threatened. You've told me before that you feel drawn to darkness. Were you referring to the stag?”

“Are you saying that the stag represents my inner darkness?”

“It could represent a variety of what the inner you consists of.”

Will knitted his brows thoughtfully, his eyes still closed.

“You wouldn't want to know the inner me.” he muttered at length.

Hannibal was quite sure he could not disagree more.

Instead of answering he took the opportunity to lean over Will and kiss him. The young man's eyes flew open in surprise and closed again quickly when Hannibal licked over his lower lip. Will parted his lips and let go of all the thoughts that had been plaguing him. With the feeling of Hannibal's strong hot tongue exploring his mouth possessively, he got lost in the moment and the sigh he breathed out travelled over Hannibal's tongue into his mouth. He leaned back against the armrest, Hannibal on top of him and ran his hands up the older man's back. He felt calm and at the same time excited and feverish with desire.

When Will was half hard after just a few minutes of Hannibal's tongue claiming his mouth in all the right ways, the doctor broke the kiss and nosed along Will's cheek before saying “Rest, Will.” with a mild smile. He stood up and Will gasped at the sudden loss of body contact, his hand automatically reaching after Hannibal without his consent. He quickly dropped it to his abdomen instead and slowly regained his breath. When he moved to sit up, strong hands pushed his shoulders back down firmly.

“No. Rest.” Hannibal said patiently, as if speaking to a disobedient child. Will huffed and wanted to protest but he *was* incredibly tired... Before he realized it, his eyes had slipped shut and the last thing he noticed were knuckles softly stroking over his cheekbone.

Hannibal was quite pleased with himself. Not only had he just gained a considerable amount of time to search Will's house for anything that would tell him more about the empath, or play into his hands otherwise; he had also managed to chase whatever nightmares were haunting Will away temporarily, and somehow knowing that made him happy. He had helped the young man, and that made him happy. It didn't last long. Hannibal was completely engrossed in reading the notes Will had scribbled about the Ripper so far when the young man started squirming, the peaceful expression he had had mere seconds before gone. It was obvious another nightmare had dared to find its way into that fascinating head but since Hannibal had never found anything as satisfying as reading Will's notes about him, he had no

intention of waking the empath up. Instead of tearing him from the horrors of his dream and comforting him, Hannibal thought of something that would ultimately be more beneficial for both of them and fetched a syringe and a vial containing clear fluid from his car. He dosed the homemade anesthetic just high enough that Will's sleep would be too deep to allow dreams of any kind and that the young man would be out long enough for Hannibal to make the drive to Baltimore and back to get some supplies. He had, after all, not forgotten about the atrocious instant meals he had seen before.

When he came back to Wolf Trap, Will was, as expected, still sleeping. Hannibal was unsure if the anesthetic had even been necessary; the troubled young man must have truly been exhausted. He allowed himself to watch the stunning creature in his sleep for a while, before he tore his gaze away and focused on trying to produce an acceptable meal in Will's abominable kitchen. Just when the mouthwatering scent of fine meat boiling in red wine was starting to mingle with Will's wonderful unique scent that was ever present in the kitchen as well, -although Hannibal was quite sure that this was the room Will spent the least time in- the young man was starting to come around again.

Will slowly sat up, feeling a little drowsy but relaxed. When he inhaled once he felt even better. And also uncomfortable. He stood up and walked towards the origin of the smell and stood in the doorway for a while to watch Hannibal, both pretending the older hadn't already noticed him before he had even set a foot inside the kitchen.

"How long did I sleep?"

"Almost 9 hours." Hannibal answered, not looking up from the stove. Will pursed his lips and realized he hadn't had a single nightmare. In fact, he hardly felt like he had slept at all; more like he had been in a coma.

"You didn't have to stay." Will said and wondered if he'd actually rather Hannibal had left. He knew the answer was no.

"Being a doctor, I felt obligated to provide you with my attention." Hannibal said and lowered his head to carefully taste a spoonful of whatever it was he was cooking. "Being your friend, I feel obligated to comfort you. Considering the circumstances, my best option was to provide you with something to benefit your stomach." he added and visibly frowned at the packages in the trashcan. Will crossed his arms in front of his chest.

"Don't feel any obligations towards me. It's not like I'm enabled. I'm not as fragile as the world seems to think."

"I am quite aware of that." Hannibal stepped away from the stove and looked at Will with furrowed brows. "I apologize if my actions offended you."

Will bit his lower lip. He wasn't used to people actually caring about him. Understanding him. Seeing him.

“No, *I* apologize... I’m sorry, I’m horrible at-“ he motioned at the air between them and knitted his brows “-whatever this is.” He smiled timidly and added “Thank you.”

“You are most welcome. Although I do have to criticize your dreadful kitchen equipment. Without the right brushes no painter is able to create art.”

Will quirked an eyebrow.

“Patronizing yourself, Dr. Lecter?” he said with a grin although he knew Hannibal had been understating, if anything. The man was not only an artist when it came to cuisine, he was a *god*.

“Solely justifying myself. I do hope the outcome is tolerable.”

Will couldn’t suppress a laugh, despite himself. If the food tasted anything like it smelled it was more than *tolerable*. It might in fact have been the best smell that had ever occupied his house. He finally crossed the kitchen and came to a stop next to Hannibal. The older man watched him attentively while Will glanced into the pan.

“It smells like wine.” he said surprised and Hannibal smiled.

“Fresh pork poached in Cabernet Sauvignon.” Hannibal specified. He reached out and threaded his fingers in Will’s silken locks. They were even messier than usual, 9 hours of sleep having done their deed. It made Will look wild, untamed, almost animalistic and Hannibal craved it. He wanted to see how these dark curls turned into a mess during entirely different activities. The doctor found himself tripping over his own thoughts. He realized there were two equally strong desires within him. One was to see the curls dripping with blood, while Will was guiding a scalpel through skin and flesh. The other to see them dripping with sweat, while Will was writhing beneath him. Hannibal quickly blinked both images away- they were entirely inappropriate and unwanted right now.

When they moved to the living room to eat, Will noticed Hannibal’s frown at the files that were spread on the table. He quickly put them away and sighed.

“I don’t feel like I’m much of a help.” Will admitted. “The Ripper is...” he paused and thought for a while “...different from anything I’ve ever dealt with.”

“How so?”

“Well, if you look at his time pattern, it seems chaotic at first. There isn’t even much of a pattern, except there *is*. There has to be, everything he does is meticulously planned and organized.”

“But you find it difficult to see said pattern?”

Will licked his lips thoughtfully and took a first bite from his meal. It was indeed *tolerable*. Hannibal noted Will’s pleased face with a triumphant feeling while he lifted his fork as well.

“He killed his last victim less than two days ago, just a week after his previous two.-” Will said and Hannibal smiled around his mouthful of meat. The pork was *very* fresh indeed.

“-The trace will go cold again any time now. It’s like he’s stocking up on kills before resting again, if that makes sense.” Will took another bite and stared off into space, apparently lost in thought. Hannibal wondered if he might be thinking about George Tamie’s corpse while he was eating his calf. The calf from the same leg he had used to kick against Hannibal’s door after the doctor had politely refused to *join the movement to fight the government’s conspiracies*.

“A predator with a killing schedule.” The doctor said thoughtfully. “Perhaps you should concentrate less on the time span. I doubt there is enough information to build up on it.” He sipped from his wine and casually asked “What did you see in the Ripper’s mentality?”

Will sighed. “I don’t know. It’s all blurry. I can’t seem to get into his head. It’s like there’s an essential piece of the puzzle I’m missing.”

“You might be standing too close. To see what piece completes the image you must take a step back and allow yourself to look.”

“Are you saying I should start over?”

“I think you are too preoccupied. You should try to regain clarity over your thoughts.”

“I doubt ‘clarity over my thoughts’ is a luxury I’ll ever have.”

Hannibal’s lips curled into a soft smile.

“Indeed not. Not if you continue to burden yourself with the entirety of pains this world has to offer.”

Will huffed and sipped his wine with a bitter look on his face.

“I feel like I’m in therapy.”

“Do you oppose the idea of therapy?” Hannibal asked patiently.

Will glanced at him darkly.

“You should know the answer to that.”

“Allow me to rephrase. Do you oppose the idea of remedy?”

“I’m not crazy, *Dr. Lecter*.”

“*Insanity is often the logic of an accurate mind overtaken.*” Hannibal quoted.

“Oliver Wendell Holmes was a physician, not a psychologist.”

“He was not wrong.” the doctor retorted and watched how Will gathered up the last forkful of meat that was left on his plate.

“My mind isn’t overtaken.” Will said at length after he had swallowed. “Overused maybe, but not overtaken.” he added and leaned back his chair.

“The end result remains the same. Jack might not acknowledge it, but you do. And so do I.”

“You think I’m insane too?” Will said with a sarcastic undertone, his eyes fixed on the empty plate in front of him.

“I think you don’t show enough interest in what is best for *you*.”

“People are dying. Selfishness won’t help anything.”

“Neither will self-destruction.”

Will let out a sharp, disbelieving laugh.

“Why are you telling me all this?”

Hannibal furrowed his brow and rose from his seat to collect Will’s empty plate.

“Because I worry about you.”

“Why?”

Why? When had Hannibal come to care about another person so much? Why did he worry when he himself was part of the destruction? Why did he want to fix the young man just as much as he wanted to break him?

Hannibal had no answer.

Chapter End Notes

You know, if any of you like to draw and can find some sort of inspiration in my fic, I'd be the happiest little fannibal on earth if someone made fanart somehow based on it. Just saying. I probably would like, explode. Like, really. Boom.

Also it's been almost two weeks! How's your HeAteUs going?

Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Here's the chapter we've all been waiting for.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Even though Will was still quite exhausted, he couldn't stop smiling the next day, not even when Bev texted him that one of the waitresses was sick, meaning they'd all have to do an extra section tonight. It was hard for Will to determine whether it was the fact that he had finally gotten some sleep, the long conversation with Hannibal, the delicious meal or not least the lingering and heated kiss they had shared when Hannibal had left in the evening, but something had lifted his mood considerably. Maybe everything combined. As if they had never left his mouth, he could still feel Hannibal's lips when he walked through the door of Phillip's Bay and without him realizing, his smile widened.

"Well someone's in a good mood. Can't remember ever seeing you smile like that, Graham." Zeller said with a cunning grin while he pushed a dumb waiter crowded with various dressings towards the kitchen. Will grabbed the other end and helped him maneuver it through the narrow kitchen door.

"Something happen?" Zeller asked smugly. Will raised an eyebrow and shrugged.

"Can't I just feel good for once?"

"Absolutely not. You're Grumpy-Graham."

Beverly entered the kitchen in that moment and laughed out loud.

"Seriously, Zee? That's the stupidest nickname I've ever heard."

"Whatever, penguin."

Beverly moved to pinch his arm but he was quicker and jumped into the tiled area, where only the chefs were allowed. She shook her head with a grin and then turned her attention to Will.

"He's right though. You're not the kind of person who 'just feels good'."

"Thanks." Will said sarcastically. Bev looked at him intensely for a while until he blushed under her penetrating gaze and suddenly she grinned knowingly.

“Table 5?” she asked and grinned wider when instead of answering Will exited the kitchen.

When he stepped out, he almost bumped into Freddie Lounds. He glared at her defensively.

“What are you doing here?!”

“Just wanted to give you this.” she said calmly and handed him a document. The next moment she was gone and Will quickly threw a look around to make sure he wasn’t needed before he rushed into the break room. He slumped down onto the bench and started reading.

When he was done, he felt like throwing up and his head-ache came back with a force that tore a whine from his throat. The article was pure fiction, but he knew what damage it could do should she publish it. Cursing, he fished for his phone and called her.

“You can’t publish this.”

“This is a free country, I can do whatever I want.”

“None of what you’ve written is even remotely true!”

“People don’t want the truth, Mr. Graham.”

“Don’t you have any sense of decency? This would cost me my job *and* ruin Dr. Lecter’s reputation!”

“And you still defend him, even after he took advantage of you under false pretense.”

“You know damn well he did no such thing.”

*“It’s not important what **I** know.”*

“You-”

“I’d be careful about what you say to me if I were you. My offer still stands.”

Will drew in a shaky, desperate breath. He was caught up between wanting to strangle the woman and wanting to cut her open and watch her bleed out.

“Alright, Freddie. You won.”

“I knew I could talk some sense into you. I’ll text you soon. Good bye, Mr. Graham.”

Will tossed his cellphone against the lockers angrily and banged his head back against the wall. After a few moments of silence his breathing had somewhat calmed and with a deep inhale he stood up to go back to work, trying to think of anything but Freddie Lounds.

The day passed, the sun slowly wandering closer to the horizon, throwing golden shadows on the red carpeted floor of the restaurant and just like that, it was 7:30pm and Hannibal walked in. Will found himself *really* distracted and had never been so glad when the last

guest left. Beverly threw a wicked smile at him before taking her leatherjacket and leaving. Will poured two glasses of wine and sat down at table 5.

“How are you feeling, Will?” Hannibal asked softly and Will knew. He knew Hannibal could see him. See right through him.

“Freddie Lounds came to see me today.” he said quietly and sipped his wine.

“What did she want?”

“Does it matter?”

Hannibal furrowed his brow surprised.

“I would say that depends. She appears to be the reason you are distressed.”

“Who says I’m distressed?” Will asked through gritted teeth. He hadn’t touched his scar this time. He was perfectly calm. Except for the fact that whenever he closed his eyes, he saw Freddie Lounds bleeding.

Suddenly something in his head snapped into place. *He* didn’t see her. Someone else did. It became clear to him that, with all this time spent on trying to understand the Chesapeake Ripper, his mind had somehow managed to blur the lines between his and the Ripper’s mentality. He felt the desire to kill Freddie Lounds and that desire was not his. Well, at least not entirely. He was in the Ripper’s mind, felt what the Ripper would feel, saw what the Ripper would see, and Will would be lying if he would have said he wasn’t fascinated. He saw how hands that were attached to his body but not his own cut the reporter open from throat to pelvis. Slowly. Meticulously. Appreciative. A clean cut. Pure, beautiful red blood cleansing her skin. He saw the hand reaching inside and felt warm pulsating organs. Before he- the Ripper- could tighten his grip and reveal what treasures lay within the worthless woman, Will snapped back with a loud gasp. Hannibal was by his side, whispering calming words in a language Will didn’t recognize and stroking a soothing hand through his hair. Will realized his entire body was trembling and his breath was rapid, as well as his heart rate. It felt like an anxiety attack except Will knew it wasn’t. It was *excitement*. Excitement about what he had seen. Power. Strength. Passion. Thrill. He tried to calm himself with the thought that it was just an aftermath of being in the Ripper’s head. It wasn’t *him* who was excited. Not him. Still the Ripper. Will could hide behind that thought for a while and his head started to clear up.

“I’m fine.” he brought out and reached for Hannibal’s wrist to pull his hand out of his hair. He entangled their fingers and was briefly distracted and amazed by how perfectly their hands fit together. Like two long lost pieces of a puzzle. Piece of a puzzle. What had Hannibal said? *Allow yourself to look*. Will had looked and he had seen. Not a motive, a reason. A motivation. The Ripper had killed Freddie in his head because she had been inappropriate, just like the girl in the barn. Because she had been *rude*.

“He’s picking his victims for a reason.” he said, not caring that it came completely out of the blue. He knew Hannibal would understand anyway.

“They do or say something, or maybe there’s even just something in their appearance, that the Ripper perceives as rude, as flawed. He seeks out people whom he sees as worthless. To turn them into something better. To give them a purpose.”

Hannibal’s hand tightened around Will’s, but the empath was too caught up in his thoughts to notice.

“He sees a taint and corrects it.” the doctor murmured and Will nodded, his eyes dazed and Hannibal could tell that he was still not quite present.

“Will.” Hannibal said softly. He reached up to cup Will’s cheek and turned the young man’s head towards him. “Stay with me.”

Will leaned into the touch and blinked a few times until his eyes and thoughts were completely clear again.

“I saw it. I was in his head. He...I-” Will trailed off and thought for a moment. “...*we* killed Freddie Lounds.” he said.

Hannibal Lecter was a man of supreme self-control but this was too much, the empath having expressed *such intimacy* without even being aware he did. The doctor’s eyes darkened and that was the only warning Will got before he leaned forward and sunk his teeth into the flesh of Will’s neck, not breaking skin, but making the young man squirm nonetheless.

“An interesting choice of words.” Hannibal whispered, mouthing at Will’s neck. “Did you see yourself as the Ripper?”

“Yes and no.” Will said and interrupted himself with a soft moan when Hannibal started sucking at the bite mark he had just left. “I was aware of what he was doing and felt every twitch with my own hands-“ Will gasped as Hannibal pressed his tongue to his pulse point. “-but I didn’t feel like I had any control over it.”

Hannibal moved on to nibble at Will’s jawline and pulled slightly back to murmur against the young man’s skin.

“Did you feel obliged to take control?”

“No...I-“ Will pressed his lips together as Hannibal bit him again “I didn’t want him to stop.”

Will’s words sent a strong wave of want through Hannibal and before he knew it, he had lifted the young man onto the table. Will was clinging to him, his arms tight around his neck and he willingly spread his legs to accommodate Hannibal, who was pulling him against his body. Hannibal leaned close, staring into Will’s eyes, where the blue was nothing more than a thin ring looped around his blown pupils now. The older man shifted closer until their lips were just inches apart.

“How did he kill her?” he asked, his voice still perfectly professional and calm. One couldn’t quite say the same for Will as he muttered:

“He...cut her open.”

When Hannibal rolled his hips against Will's, the young man groaned loudly, the sound echoing through the empty restaurant. Hannibal felt the resonance against his lips, even though he still kept them a few inches away from Will's.

"And how did that make you feel?" Hannibal asked, running his hands up Will's thighs.

"Don't psychoanalyze me." the younger man breathed and grabbed Hannibal's collar to pull him closer and finally crashed their lips together.

Hannibal immediately started taking, claiming, devouring. He wasn't a greedy man, but if something this exquisite was offered to him he was certainly not going to refuse. Will leaned back and pulled Hannibal with him. Luckily the only thing that was still on the table were the wine glasses, and those were out of reach, otherwise they would have ended up shattered on the floor. The edge of the table was pressing against Will's thighs uncomfortably so he shifted until he was practically lying on table 5, dragging Hannibal on top of him. The doctor was kissing Will messily and hungrily, his hands wandering to Will's bowtie, loosening it and tearing it off before he started to work the first buttons of his shirt open. It wasn't that easy to undress the young man while he was biting and tearing on Hannibal's lower lip almost beastly and by the time Hannibal was finally able to run his hands over bare skin, both their lips were bruised and swollen.

"Hannibal" Will sighed breathy and fumbled at the doctor's waistcoat with shaky fingers. It took a while, but he managed to get it off and as soon as it slid to the floor he turned his attention to Hannibal's shirt while the older man was mouthing down Will's throat, leaving a nasty bruise on his collar bone and closing his lips over a nipple. Will gasped and almost tore the button he was trying to open off when Hannibal started sucking at the tender flesh and went as far as dragging his teeth over it before he continued to lick, suck and kiss his way down Will's torso. When he reached the long, pink scar on his abdomen, he pulled back a bit to take a good look at it.

Will immediately felt vulnerable and exposed. It felt as if Hannibal's eyes were tearing the wound back open like small, piercing daggers. A gaze, like a knife burying itself deep inside and tearing at his skin until he was open and bleeding again. Will squirmed and tried to get off the table but Hannibal's hands held him in place and the older man shifted to press his lips to Will's soothingly. Rather than kissing him, he spoke against his mouth softly.

"Will, you are fighting against a memory. Every time you feel that weight you are allowing him to stab you again. Stop granting him such profound power over you."

Will tilted his head enough so he could stare into Hannibal's eyes. From this close, it felt like looking into a volcano, deep and dark but warm and equally dangerous. The hint of fiery lava trickling over calloused black stones, the depth threatening to pull one in. Falling head first into fire.

"It's not him who has power over me. It's my mind." Will answered, words spoken into a mouth that carried so many secrets and spoke so little of them.

"We do not control our thoughts, our thoughts control us. But it is that control that retains us from forlornness. Your mind is not your enemy, Will."

“It’s not my guidance either.”

“You sound very certain.” Hannibal stated and licked over Will’s lower lip.

“It leads me into wrong directions. I’d rather be forlorn than found by darkness.” the young man said, and sucked Hannibal’s tongue into his mouth as soon as the last word had left it. He closed his eyes as the doctor ran the muscle over his teeth, slid it against Will’s tongue and licked over his lips again as he broke the kiss.

“Then let me be your guidance.” he murmured and slowly kissed down Will’s throat, skipped his chest until his lips were directly above the scar again. Will could feel his warm breath against it and grabbed the older man’s shoulders out of reflex, but he didn’t push him away. Hannibal carefully licked over the scar, causing Will to shiver, and let his lips linger there for a moment longer, before his tongue travelled further down.

He bit down on Will’s hipbone and was so amazed by the sound the young man made that he couldn’t stop himself from biting harder and breaking skin. The taste of Will’s blood was far more staggering than the doctor could have imagined and after shortly appreciating the sight of fluid crimson on smooth porcelain he bent down to collect every single drop of it with his tongue.

Will started working at the buttons of Hannibal’s shirt again, creasing the fabric considerably when the doctor bit him. Soon it slid to the floor. Hannibal’s lips were still ghosting along Will’s hipbone, gradually travelling lower. When he mouthed at Will’s inner thighs through the fabric of his pants, Will bucked his hips up impatiently, desperately seeking friction, but Hannibal grasped his hipbones and pressed them down onto the table. One of his hands slid along the hem of Will’s pants before stopping and palming the young man. Will whimpered and tried to thrust up again, but Hannibal other hand was holding him in place while he teased Will’s erection through the fabric agonizingly slow.

“Are you trying to make me beg?” Will hissed after a while and threw his head back against the table when Hannibal *decreased* the friction in response.

“I certainly wouldn’t object.”

Will didn’t need to look down; he could *hear* his smug grin and pressed his eyes shut.

“Finding pleasure in submission, is that what you’re getting at?” Will asked and bit back a groan when Hannibal’s grip suddenly tightened.

“Submission is an act of trust. Do you trust me, Will?”

“Dominance is an act of control.” Will answered, ignoring Hannibal’s question. “Do you feel in control, Hannibal?” He quickly shifted and managed to flip them over, kicking one of the glasses off the table in the process. He was now sitting on top of Hannibal, straddling his groin. He propped his hands on either side of Hannibal’s head and rolled his hips against the other’s forcefully. Hannibal looked up at him; his usually neat hair disheveled and Will reached out to brush it from his face.

“Mutual exchange.” the doctor hummed and captured Will’s hand to press soft kisses to each knuckle.

“Equals.” Will added and ground down against Hannibal again. The older man pulled Will down until they were chest to chest and found his lips again, kissing him deeply while reaching down between them. He opened Will’s and his own trousers, and by the time he broke the kiss their pants were lying on the floor next to their shirts. He cupped Will’s erection, the young man’s boxer briefs the only thing that was in the way now, and started stroking him through the fabric slowly. Will’s breath caught in his throat and despite his best efforts he couldn’t suppress a low, needy moan. He reached down too and tore on fabric until they were both completely naked. Hannibal ran his hand up Will’s chest and over his throat until he reached his lips. He pressed his fingers to Will’s mouth and Will parted his lips, licking and sucking while Hannibal continued to stroke him with his free hand. When Hannibal withdrew his fingers from Will’s mouth the young man made a disapproving grunt that turned into a gasp when a saliva coated finger was pushed into him without a warning. He rocked back against the finger immediately, ignoring the pain and his body’s need to slow down. A second finger was added and Will buried his face in the crook of Hannibal’s neck, mouthing at his skin and making occasional muffled sounds when the doctor curled his fingers. Hannibal added a third finger and Will exhaled loudly, burning pain from too much too fast mixing with pleasure. After a while, Hannibal withdrew his hand and rested it on Will’s hip to slowly guide him down. Will lowered himself on Hannibal’s cock and bit down on the doctor’s pulse point hard when he filled him inch by inch. Once he was settled, Will sat up and tried to regain his breath. He gave himself some time to adjust before he let Hannibal’s hand guide him into a steady pace. The older man curled his other hand around Will’s length again and matched his speed with his thrusts.

Even though the temptation to close his eyes was strong, Hannibal forced them to stay open. He wanted to see, to watch the beautiful creature on top of him come undone. When he hit Will’s prostate the young man’s eyes rolled back and he cried out. The sound was enough to make Hannibal’s cock leak a load of precum and he angled his thrusts to hit the spot every time. Soon enough, Will was whimpering and Hannibal felt his length pulsating in his hand. He quickly tightened his grip around the base to cut off Will’s impending orgasm. The young man’s eyes flew open and a low whine escaped his throat. He locked eyes with Hannibal and pursed his lips before growling:

“Please.”

Hannibal’s eyes lit up and he pulled Will down against his chest before loosening his grip and murmuring into Will’s ear:

“You may come for me now, Will.”

And Will did, spilling hot pleasure on his and Hannibal’s chests. Hannibal pumped him empty even as Will was oversensitive and the soft whimper against his neck pushed the doctor over the edge too. After he had guided Will to ride through his orgasm, Hannibal had to lift the empath off with a small smile, since Will just collapsed on top of him and didn’t move. He wrapped his arms around the young man tightly and positioned them as

comfortably as the wooden table allowed. Will nuzzled at his neck and after a while he muttered:

“Yes. I trust you,” and leaned up to kiss Hannibal slowly and gently. The doctor smiled against his lips and carefully sat up, pulling the empath with him. He cleaned them up and dressed the young man like one would a child. Will didn’t protest; his eyes still glassy from the aftershocks of his orgasm. He didn’t even protest when Hannibal gathered his things and carried him out the front door, and neither did he when he was seated in Hannibal’s car. At some point he must have fallen asleep, because the next thing he could remember was waking up in Hannibal’s bed in the early morning hours, the older man’s arm draped around his waist, his hand softly stroking over his scar. Will had slept like a dead man, and not a single nightmare had dared to come close to him as long as Hannibal was covering him. With a content sigh, Will closed his eyes again.

Fate was not cruel. At least not right now. Let him have his moment of peace. Let him have his feeling of safety. His calm before the storm.

Chapter End Notes

Well, well....Table-sex. Good thing Phillip's Bay isn't real because it sure has a questionable hygiene policy... Also the place doesn't seem to have any locks, considering how everyone just walks in and out how they please...

So, there's a storm coming... What do you think is going to happen?

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Days like these lead to nights like this lead to mornings like *this*.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

When Hannibal woke up, the memories of the previous night hit him immediately and he might have cursed out loud, if there hadn't been a warm body curled up against his. Never in his life had Hannibal lost his control like that. He looked at the sleeping empath with growing anger. He had made a mistake. He had slipped. But how could he have resisted? How could he resist *now*, if the young man was so angelic and *so demonic*? He remembered the look in Will's eyes when he had told him about his hallucination. *We killed her*. That's what he had said, without having any idea what these words triggered in Hannibal. What they meant. Will had been in his head; in the Ripper's head and that seemed so much more intimate than being in his body. Of course Hannibal didn't see the fact *that* it had happened as mistake; he had planned for it to happen, just not that early on. Not for a long time; not until Will could see his true face. Then and only then, if he not only accepted his darkness but appreciated it, welcomed it, *wanted it*; knowing what he was, had this been supposed to happen. He hadn't planned on taking advantage of the young man like that. Taking advantage of the fact that he couldn't see yet.

But here they were. And lying here, facing Will, smelling him, feeling him, Hannibal realized that frankly, he would make the same mistake again, if he had the chance. Will was the most unique, stunning and intriguing creature he had ever known. He couldn't change the past so he might as well savor the present. He sighed and leaned in to press soft kisses into Will's hair. The young man was pressed against his side, his head resting on Hannibal's shoulder, his face buried in the crook of his neck and his hand sprawled out on his chest. Hannibal had both his arms wrapped around him, holding him tightly, protectively, possessively. He felt Will squirming in his arms and felt thick lashes tickling his skin as they flew open. The next moment a curious tongue darted forward and licked at his neck. Hannibal smiled and tipped the young man's chin up to meet his eyes.

"Good morning, Will."

Instead of answering Will leaned up and pressed a light kiss to the corner of Hannibal's mouth before dropping his head into the pillows and clearing his throat.

"So *that* happened..." he muttered sleepily.

"Evidently."

“And what am I supposed to make of that?” Will sighed and closed his eyes again. It wasn’t like his life hadn’t been complicated enough already. Hannibal propped himself up on one elbow and watched Will thoughtfully.

“If you feel the need to label it, you should perhaps sort out how you feel about it first.”

“I know how I feel about it. I’m just not familiar with the kinds of feelings that would be accurate.”

Hannibal restrained from asking what kinds of feelings those would be. He knew that this was a delicate situation. The empath had been overwhelmed with his revelation the previous day, and Hannibal believed this would not have happened if he hadn’t been. The question now was, was the reluctant young man going to restore his wall and pull back or would he allow himself to give in? He had said he trusted Hannibal, which was good; it was an essential part of the cannibal’s plan, but did Will *really* allow himself to trust yet? Hannibal had shown him on various occasions that he didn’t need to pretend. That he didn’t need to hide his mind, hide his darkness. Not from Hannibal. He had shown him he understood, as well as he could without cracking his mask. But now *this* had happened, something that hadn’t been planned, something unexpected. *A mistake*, Hannibal reminded himself. All he could do now was to try and make the best out of it, but for that it was important that Will didn’t pull away.

Unfortunately, that was exactly what Will did.

The young man rolled over to take a look at his watch and pursed his lips.

“My... my shift starts. I have to go.”

That was all he said before he gathered his things and left, his steps a little quicker than they would have needed to be. A mongoose fleeing a serpent’s nest. Hannibal sighed. He was a patient man, but this would be an unnecessary slowdown for his plan. And he only had himself to blame, he shouldn’t have let irrational desire overcome his rational consciousness. It had been overwhelming for him, more than Hannibal Lecter would have thought it possible, that Will truly understood. The empath had been in his head, he had seen, he had understood. And he had *liked*. Hannibal knew too well that it hadn’t been a seizure or a panic attack that had left Will trembling the previous day. The young man had seen the Ripper’s design performed on someone he wanted dead himself. Hannibal could only imagine how satisfying it must have been for Will, and how much he must have been loathing himself for it. The doctor was well aware that he was playing a dangerous game, but it was beyond fascinating, beyond endearing to watch Will’s struggle.

Hannibal knew the empath fought against the darkness that threatened to consume him, and though his initial plan had once been to play as long as fate allowed and then clear the way of his current opponent, he now found the thought of helping the darkness consume, of being the darkness and of making Will *become* the darkness far more interesting. It opened up an opportunity he had never considered. An opportunity of a ‘together’ where it had always been an ‘alone’. An opportunity of a future in company after a past of loneliness, loneliness he hadn’t known he minded before he had met Will. But he was thinking too far ahead. A plan was forming in his mind, and he wasn’t going to let the idea go, but there was still

enough to deal with in the present. Naturally, he wasn't going to go to Phillip's Bay today. He would have to wait until Will would come to him. Under the illusion it had been his own decision. The only thing Hannibal could hope for was that the young man was going to come soon, because his unyielding patience seemed to weaken considerably regarding Will.

*

Will sat in the backseat of a taxi. The leather seats were worn out and the car smelled of cigarettes and rain. A Springsteen song played faintly in the radio, barely loud enough to be more than a background noise that mixed with the low hum of the car motor. He shifted on his seat, feeling as if his entire lower back was on fire. The leather seats that were probably quite soft, felt like sandpaper to him. He had called in sick as soon as he had left Hannibal's house. He needed to clear his head. Too much had happened the day before. Not only had he finally gotten closer to the Chesapeake Ripper and agreed to being Freddie Lounds' informant in an official FBI case, he had also slept with a psychiatrist who had somehow become a constant part of his life without him noticing. 'Slept with' might be the wrong choice of words. Considering the burn he was feeling 'fucked raw' might have been more accurate. Will was pretty sure there was a lot he should be thinking about, but he had no idea where to start, so he allowed his mind to wander off on its own. It took him to Michael Wiss' porch.

The house is small and the front door is facing the woods that swallow the rear part of the huge garden. White cherry blossoms cover the ground, pure and soft. They're everywhere, and whenever even just a gentle breeze blows, a tender rain of more blossoms floats to the ground. It would look peaceful, if there wasn't this strong aura of disaster. The door is rotten and makes a cracking noise at the second knock. There is no answer. A small, barred window just above the ground betrays a basement. There is a sound coming from the basement. Something metallic. Another knock. The door swings open. The hall appears to be empty. A call cuts through the silence. No answer. A gun cocks and the wooden floor creaks underneath careful footsteps. The house is empty, but the basement isn't. Another sound. Definitely something metallic. There is a door, almost hidden behind a large mirror. The mirror makes a small sound when it is set on the floor and the noises in the basement stop.

When the door opens, something is different. This scenery is familiar. Everything is like the memory. Except it feels different. Something is different. The staircase is the same, the walls are still covered in pictures showing the Singe Strangler's victims, there is a cabinet in the corner and a table in the middle of the room. Michael Wiss is standing next to the table, a stained hunting knife in his hands. Just like the memory. The Strangler's eyes are dark, almost black and they stare, consider, decide. He takes a quick step forward and lifts the knife.

Will shoots. Once, twice, five times. The Singe Strangler is dead.

The taxi stopped and Will opened his eyes startled. He was back in reality and his pulse was racing much like the previous evening. Except this time it hadn't been the Ripper, it had been himself. He had killed Michael Wiss in his head, and there was no hiding, no denying, no escaping the way it had made him feel. He couldn't hide from his own mind.

"Sir, this it?" the taxi driver asked. He had a snarling undertone and Will realized they were standing outside Phillip's Bay. He nodded and paid the driver. The young man walked over to his car quickly, still parked where he had left it before his shift had started the day before. When he was already half inside, a small but strong hand grabbed his shoulder and jerked him back. Beverly was standing in front of him; her brows knitted half in anger, half in concern. She must have seen him through Phillip's wide panorama-windows.

"Do you have any idea how worried I was?? You're not answering my texts or calls, your car is still parked here but you're nowhere to be found and then they tell me you called in sick! What the hell is going on?"

Will assumed his phone battery had died but he didn't bother to check. He didn't want to talk to Alana right now, let alone Hannibal after he had practically fled his house, and the last thing he needed was Jack calling him to a crime scene or Freddie texting him about the Ripper case. It was probably for the best if his phone was dead.

"There's nothing going on, I just don't feel well."

"So you just slept in the parking lot or what?" she answered dryly.

He pursed his lips and turned to get in the car.

"Will do not just drive away now," Beverly squeaked. "I'm not done with you!"

He sighed and glared up at her.

"What do you want me to say, Beverly? I don't feel well, ok?"

"No. Not ok. If you start driving I'm going to jump in front of your car."

Will had the strange feeling that she was actually being serious and sighed again.

"I didn't sleep in the parking lot," he began and stopped, deciding to let her figure out the rest by herself. After a few short moments a gasp escaped her lips and she started jumping up and down like an excited child.

"No way!" she exclaimed and shook Will's shoulder frantically. "No. Way." she said again, over-emphasizing each word. Will blushed and just shrugged, trying to shake her hand off as she continued to squeeze his shoulder until it almost hurt.

"Will!" she squeaked and suddenly reached up to tug Will's collar down. The fabric revealed one of the marks Hannibal had left on him, bright and purple, the hint of the shape of teeth along the edges, gleaming just underneath his pulse point.

“No way,” she breathed a third time and started grinning so widely Will was worried her lips would rip.

“Does this revelation really affect your vocabulary this much?” he asked, lips tugging upwards weakly. She immediately frowned at the poor attempt of a smile.

“That is not the face of a man who spent the night with sexy mister cheekbones from table 5,” she said. “What’s bugging you?”

He furrowed his brow and pursed his lips, really not in the mood to discuss his cowardly retreat.

“I might have... failed to stay for breakfast” he muttered and winced at the sudden blow to his arm.

“What?! Please don’t tell me you just left, Will! No second round? No shower together? Not even morning-after-cuddling??”

“Bev!” Will grunted and glared at her, causing her to hit his arm again.

“I’m serious! You can’t just do that! He’s been coming to Phillip’s every night now for, what, two months? Three? And you two have basically been undressing each other with your eyes from day one.”

Will’s blush deepened and he played with the thought of simply driving away, but Beverly was holding the door open effectively, and was now so close she was almost sitting in his lap.

“It was a rushed decision. I wasn’t thinking clearly,” he stated. Beverly stared at him for a moment and asked:

“Do you mean leaving or going with him?”

Will thought for a moment, deciding not to tell her that he didn’t so much went with him as letting him fuck him right there on table 5.

“I don’t know. Both feels like a mistake,” he answered and chewed on his lower lip. She looked at him thoughtfully, her gaze drifting to the bruise on his neck again.

“Well, whatever you feel, it can’t both have been a mistake. One was the right thing to do, you just have to decide what the right thing is to you.”

He glanced at her and shrugged again.

“I... I just really don’t like that I like him.”

She shook her head and released his shoulder at last.

“You are a coward, Will Graham,” she said affectionately.

Will huffed and started the car.

“You wouldn’t be the first one to say that,” he said bitterly. Most people who only knew him through the media had nothing else to say about him. A detective who failed to shoot a criminal. Coward, right?

“Listen, I know you don’t really let people in. But the guy seems to keep knocking on your door, and honestly, I think he might have found an open window. Are you really going to push him out?” she asked, her voice loud enough to be audible over the hum of the engine. He opened his mouth to answer but she shushed him. “Ah, don’t say anything. Just think about it. There is no reason not to be happy, Will. And I swear, if you don’t call him I’m going to lock you in the cold room.”

He actually managed a smile at that and she stepped back and closed the door. As he backed out of the parking lot she shouted:

“You still owe me all the dirty details, Graham!”

Will pretended he hadn’t heard her and drove away. Bev gazed after him, her grin still spread across her face as she tried not to let her imagination roam free.

She wasn’t aware that this might have been the last time she would ever see Will.

When Will entered his home, his dogs crowded him, barking and glaring at him accusingly. They were hungry and needed to get out of the house, needed to be taken care of; a fact that Will had admittedly selfishly forgotten during the previous night. Once the bowls were filled up and the porch door wide open, Will poured himself a glass of whiskey and leaned against the railing. He stared into the depths of the woods in front of him and there was a thought in his mind, so brief it was gone before he could truly acknowledge or recognize it, but he could hear its silent echo in his head. His house was just as isolated as Wiss’ house had been. He was just as lonely as Wiss had been. In another life, he could easily be like Wiss. He could be a criminal. A murderer. He could be like the Chesapeake Ripper. Will realized how alarmingly well he fit the profile of a serial killer.

Troubled childhood. Mental health issues. Loner. Isolated. Anti-social. Job in law-enforcement. Trauma. Hallucinations.

The young man silenced his mind by downing the whiskey and tried to focus on something else. Hannibal.

I doubt clarity over my thoughts is a luxury I’ll ever have.

Hannibal gave him a strange feeling of safety. He understood him. He grounded him. He was clarity for Will, maybe the only clarity he would ever get. The only clarity he deserved. The doctor had made his way into Will’s life, into his head, and that was something no one had ever done before, because he had never let anyone, but Hannibal seemed to have accomplished it effortlessly. *He found an open window.* And Will had stormed out. Ran away once again. Self-destruction. Or self-protection? Good things don’t last, that much he had

learned throughout his life, and Hannibal might have been the best thing he had ever had the chance of having.

Good things don't last. Spare yourself the disappointment, the pain.

He wanted to. He really wanted to just forget before fate would turn on him, because he knew that eventually it would. It always did. But he couldn't. Maybe it was because he felt drawn to danger; to risk. There was no greater risk than trust. No greater danger than commitment. To commit was to trust, and to trust was to lose in a game where winning was only possible alone. A game where loneliness was the prize one had to pay to survive. That was all Will had ever done. Surviving. Not living, surviving. And until now, he had never felt the desire to change that. Not until he had met Hannibal. Suddenly being lonely meant something so different than before. Give in. That was all he had to do. He was the only one standing in his way. Give in.

After he had spent the day and a sleepless night inside himself, buried deep within his thoughts, withdrawn from the world, he stood up and got in his car to make the drive to Baltimore. He had no intention of going to work today. There was something he needed to fix.

Will truly did feel drawn to danger. Maybe his subconscious already knew that Hannibal was far more dangerous than his consciousness could imagine. Maybe something deep down knew what he was getting into, it just didn't let him see yet.

When he reached Baltimore, his phone rang. He had let it recharge overnight, and seeing Jack's name on the display, he regretted it.

"Yes?"

"Will, where are you?"

"Baltimore."

"Good, I need you. We got a body."

"Is it the Ripper?"

"That's why I need you. We're not sure. This one's...different."

"Different?"

"You'll see when you get here. I texted you the address."

The protesting answer that escaped Will's throat remained unheard, for Jack had already hung up. Will didn't get to protest. He didn't get to say no. His conscience forbid him to and Jack took advantage of that; that wasn't a secret to Will. He really shouldn't be surprised he got drawn back in. In fact, it now seemed like a waste of time that he had ever gotten out. Tried to have a normal life. Ludicrous.

With a sigh Will opened the message from Jack and changed his destination. Maybe he would change his mind too.

The sun was slowly climbing higher as he reached the crime scene. Jack was talking to an officer when he saw him and quickly walked over.

“In the basement.” he just said and nodded in the direction of the house in front of them. Will had gotten no information whatsoever, he had no idea what they were dealing with. When he walked towards the house the world around him stilled, his mind preparing to let the pendulum swing. The air in the basement was cool and he felt it prickling against his skin. It was dark, but light enough to clearly see the lifeless woman on the table in the middle of the room. She was staring up at the ceiling and lay bare, presented, displayed. Her neck was bruised. Cause of death: strangulation. There was a cut across her abdomen, allowing to look inside her like an opened book. Her intestines had been taken from her but instead of leaving an empty void, the killer had stuffed her stomach with cherry blossoms, the pure, velvety white stained and soaked in crimson. The woman had no injuries otherwise, except for a single cigarette burn on her chest, directly over her heart. Will swallowed hard at all the familiarities and closed his eyes.

I know your routine. I've been watching you, but not for long. You're not worth my attention. I am familiar with your house, I've broken in before to see if the stage is fitting. I wait for you. You have no idea I am here. I am hiding in plain sight and you don't see me. No one does. I step out of the darkness; the look of shock in your eyes gives me satisfaction just before I strangle you. I take the one primal thing that everyone is doomed to have. I burn you and cut you open after I killed you. This isn't about torture. You are nothing more than an object, a symbol with the purpose to reveal. I use you for revelation. This is my design.

“It's the Ripper.” Will said when he heard Jack stepping behind him.

“Will... the-“

“I know. He included the Singe Strangler's design in his.”

“Why?” Jack asked and looked at Will with piercing eyes. The empath pressed his lips together and thought for a while.

“To help us see.” he muttered at length. “Jack, where did Michael Wiss grow up?”

“Georgetown.”

“Pull records of every unsolved homicide there in the past twenty years.”

Jack cocked his head in surprise.

“You think he's killed before?”

“I think that’s what the Ripper is trying to tell us.”

Jack was meanwhile already calling the techs to pull the records and when he hung up he looked at the corpse thoughtfully.

“Why is he helping us?” he asked, and there was clear disgust in his voice that the Chesapeake Ripper might have just pointed out a serial killer to them.

Will inhaled deeply and wet his lips. After a long moment of silence he shook his head, barely visible and answered:

“I don’t know.”

Two hours later, Will was standing in the conference room of the BAU, pictures of 23 women on the pin board in front of him. 23. All strangled and sexually assaulted. The Singe Strangler had made his name long before he had come to Baltimore. There were time gaps between the victims, not too long to be entirely impossible to maintain for a sexual sadist, but long enough that the connection had never been made.

“I just got off the phone with the authorities; Michael Wiss will be brought back to court.” Jack said as he entered. He stared at the pin board for a while and slowly shook his head. “How could we have missed this?”

“Michael Wiss is a lot smarter than we thought... I redid his profile based on the murders.” Will muttered and handed Jack a file. The older man took it and quickly read through it.

“Alright. We’re still missing a piece here, Will.” he said and put the file on the table. “How did the Ripper know?”

Will pursed his lips and took a step towards the pin board to add the picture of Veronica Lewis, the Ripper’s victim.

“You know the saying, Jack. Killers often make the best profilers...” he said humorlessly and rubbed a hand over his forehead.

“Do you think there’s a connection between Wiss and the Ripper?” Jack asked, with the tiniest hint of hope in his voice. Will glanced at him and knitted his brows.

“Why don’t we ask him?”

Chapter End Notes

So, you're gonna meet the Singe Strangler in the next chapter.

What will he have to say about the Ripper?

Also damn it, Will, why can't you be more like Bev? I would have *loved* to write a morning after shower scene!

Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

There are three serial killers in this chapter, but luckily only two of them want to kill Will.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

This was a bad idea. Will's hand was constantly brushing his scar as he walked down a long hallway. Every brain cell in his head screamed at him to turn the fuck around and walk away. He didn't. He couldn't. He needed answers. Dr. Chilton was leading Will through the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. Will had met Chilton before, during an investigation when he had still been a detective. The man wasn't exactly likeable and hadn't been subtle about his pressing curiosity about Will's mind, but the empath couldn't care less right now. They reached a stone staircase that led down to a large room with grey tiles. Everything about it was depressing, cold, dark. The room was empty except for the faded yellow cages that were lined up through the length of the room. Michael Wiss sat in one of them, looking up and staring at Will with his dark eyes. Will swallowed and turned to look at Chilton who was still standing behind him.

"I think I can go from here, doctor." Will said. Chilton frowned and stood still for a bit longer before reluctantly turning around and walking back upstairs. Nosy bastard. Will knew there were cameras in the room, but it was even more unnerving to have the doctor present than just have him watching. The young man walked across the room, slowly closing the distance between him and the occupied cage.

"Hello, William." the Strangler said with a calm smile. Will took the last few steps and sat down on the single chair opposite the cage. He let a short silence pass before he answered.

"I wasn't aware we were on a first name basis." he said, his voice as even as he could manage.

"I think stabbing someone provides a certain kind of intimacy. Tell me, William, did I leave a nice scar?"

Will cursed his body for the reflex as his hand immediately rose to reach for his abdomen. Wiss' eyes lit up and he grinned satisfied.

"I did, didn't I? I'm curious, what's it like to have someone imprinted on your body?"

"I didn't come here to talk about myself."

“You didn’t come here to talk about me either, did you?” Michael Wiss remarked with furrowed brows. “This is about the man who was so kind as to point out my past misdeeds to you.”

“What do you know about the Chesapeake Ripper?”

“I know that I’ll get a life-sentence thanks to him.”

“Shouldn’t you be glad that your work is finally being honored? In fact I’m surprised you didn’t say anything yourself. It must have been degrading to be so...underappreciated.” Will’s tone was calm and challenging now. This was a game, and thanks to the Ripper he knew his opponent inside out.

“A gentleman never tells,” Michael said with a bitter grin. Will leaned forward in his chair and watched the Strangler’s body language attentively.

“But you’re not a gentleman, Michael. You’re a sadistic narcissist; you should be yearning to get the attention you think you deserve. Yet you didn’t say a word.”

“Despite our... nature, killers do tend to keep their promises.” Wiss replied at length. The young empath sighed. Of course the prick would be cryptic.

“And why would you promise someone to downplay your body count?” Will asked, considerably less patient.

“Because I know better than to interfere with the plans of Baltimore’s greatest predator.”

“I thought *you* were Baltimore’s greatest predator.” Will immediately shot back, suddenly very aware of the situation. The rivalry between two killers, a power play the Singe Strangler had lost. Will’s remark was enough to wipe the smug grin off Michael’s face.

“I thought I could be. But the Chesapeake Ripper is very...persuasive.”

“Then consider this your chance to turn the tables. Show him that he too underestimated you.”

The smile returned to Michael’s features and he cocked his head.

“I’d rather not end up in a cell next to the Ripper. I’m sorry, pretty boy; you’re wasting your time. I’m not gonna rat on a colleague.” With those words he leaned back and closed his eyes, making a dismissive gesture with his hand. Their conversation was over. Will knew it would be pointless to try and get more, plus his scar felt as if it was bleeding again and he was in fact glad to get out. He rose from his seat and walked towards the stairs. When he was almost gone, Wiss called out to him.

“It was nice to meet you again, William. I can see why he likes you so much.”

Will stiffened but didn’t do him the favor of turning around. He stood still for a moment before he continued walking. Even though Wiss hadn’t said that much, he had certainly told

him a lot. When Will exited the room, Chilton was already waiting on top of the stairs. Will sighed.

“Did Wiss receive any letters?” he asked the doctor. Chilton nodded and lead Will towards his office.

“Yes, quite a lot actually. The usual; secret admirers, vengeful relatives, a few curious teens.” he said while he sat down in his office chair. “Why are you asking?”

“Did someone write him regularly?” Will said. He could see Chilton’s eyes narrow a bit upon having his question ignored. The man wasn’t used to not getting what he asked for.

“A lot of people did. But I’m going to save you the trouble of reading them all; I think I know what you’re looking for.”

Will raised his eyebrows questioningly and Chilton leaned back in his chair and traced the edge of the desk with his index finger thoughtfully.

“There was someone who kept sending these letters; old heavy stationary, hand-written with dark ink. At first we thought it was another admirer but with time passing they seemed to have developed a kind of... code. We couldn’t make sense of the content anymore and one day the letters just stopped.”

Will leaned forward in his chair, his gaze riveted on Chilton, as penetrating as it could be without meeting his eyes.

“And where are these letters now?”

“He read them once and destroyed them. Dissolved them in his sink,” Chilton answered and clasped his hands together in his lap.

“And that didn’t seem strange to you??” Will snapped. This time, Chilton’s eyes narrowed very visibly.

“Mr. Graham, this is a mental institution full of criminals. If we’d pay attention to everything remotely strange that happens here, I’d have to quadruple my personnel.”

*

Will was in his car, still parked outside the BSHCI and tried to get a hold of his thoughts. Like so often in these past few days, there was too much going on, too much to worry about. So the Ripper hadn’t done this to make the FBI see, he had done it to make *Will* see.

I can see why he likes you so much.

Michael Wiss knew him, he knew who the Ripper was and apparently the Ripper knew who Will was. Also Freddie Lounds would certainly soon contact him due to the latest developments of this case.

Also these developments revealed that Will had survived a serial killer.

Survive.

Right. He had wanted to visit Hannibal. To fix something he might have destroyed just so it wouldn't break one day. Will reached up to pinch the bridge of his nose for a while and sighed before he straightened his back and started the car.

When he parked outside Hannibal's house he realized he had no idea if the doctor was even home. The door that lead to the waiting room wasn't locked, so Will assumed he was with a patient and sat down in one of the chairs after short consideration. He almost laughed at himself. The last time he had been sitting in a therapist's waiting room had been at the age of 14, after his teacher had sent him to the school psychiatrist. He couldn't even remember why, he had been in trouble often when he had been younger. Being different had always meant being either laughable or intimidating. The school psychiatrist's office had been plain and ugly, nothing compared to the monstrous, finely furnished waiting room he was currently sitting in. Will noticed that, while the rest of the house smelled like Hannibal, the air here seemed to be completely...neutral. He was torn from his train of thought when the entrance door opened. A familiar face appeared, although he couldn't place it at first. The tall man stood by the door and looked at Will for a moment before he smiled. There was nothing genuine or friendly about the smile, if anything, it was predatory. Mr. Budge.

"Hello, Mr. Graham. I was hoping to find you here."

Will immediately straightened his back cautiously. The man had only been to Phillip's Bay once. How did he know Will's name? And why did he know where to find him? Who was the man?

Mr. Budge slowly went across the room and opened the door to Hannibal's office.

"Why don't we go inside? More comfortable. I'm sure Dr. Lecter won't mind."

Against better judgment, Will stood and followed the man into the office. It was huge and exactly what Will had expected Hannibal's office to be like. His eyes lingered on a strangely familiar figure, a statue of a stag, that stood on the other side of the room. Then he tore his gaze to Mr. Budge who walked towards one of the two armchairs in the center of the room. He slowly ran his fingers along the backrest of one of them.

"A friend of mine used to sit here. He was a patient of Dr. Lecter's. I would sometimes give him a ride here. He was always so excited before an appointment, he admired the good doctor." The man paused and seemed to think back. A soft sound, maybe a laugh escaped his throat. "Franklyn was a plague. Annoying, clingy and frankly quite stupid. But I did like him. He was...entertaining." he said, emphasizing the last word. Will cleared his throat.

"What happened?" he asked, although he already knew. Franklyn had to be the patient who had previously died. The tall man walked around the chair and came to a stop in front of it. He stared down at the piece of furniture and tilted his head a bit, as if he was trying to picture his friend sitting there.

"This is where he died. Broken neck." he said and suddenly looked up at Will as if he was expecting something. Will slowly took a step closer, his thoughts racing. This is where he

died. Broken neck. Broken neck. How does one break their neck while sitting in an armchair. It wasn't a question Will's mind was forming. It was an accusation. An accusation he didn't want to hear.

"I'm very sorry for your loss, Mr. Budge," Will said, carefully avoiding the other man's gaze.

"Do you know why he died, Mr. Graham?" Budge said and didn't give Will the chance to answer. "He knew too much. Saw something he shouldn't have. I told you. He was clingy. And obsessed, obsessed with Dr. Lecter."

"Is there a point to you telling me this?" Will asked and stepped to the other side of the chair, facing Tobias with only the furniture as barrier between them.

"Tell me, what does an obsessive neurotic do when the object of his obsession rejects him?" Tobias asked.

"His obsession deepens, he clutches at it all the more," Will replied, his eyes narrow.

"Exactly. Now what if the neurotic would have the opportunity to invade his obsession's privacy; to *sneak around*?"

"Mr. Budge, say what you have to say," Will snapped dryly.

"How much do you *really* know about Dr. Lecter?" Tobias asked, his voice calm but his body tense. Ready to attack. "*I* might not know much about him either, but here's what I do know. He killed Franklyn, and it was *by far* not the first person he has killed. In fact, he's made quite a name for himself. Between you and me, I am a little jealous of his reputation."

Will swallowed hard, his hand reaching for the scalpel on Hannibal's desk as Mr. Budge pulled a knife out of his jacket.

"And what about *your* reputation, Mr. Budge?" Will asked, following the movements of the predator with his eyes, his hand clutching at the scalpel. Ready to defend. The other man laughed.

"My reputation? Well, *I'm* not the Chesapeake Ripper."

The short moment Will's mind took to process the implication was enough for Tobias to close the distance between them with two quick steps. Will caught his forearm as he was jamming the knife forward and twisted until the other man groaned in pain. The empath lifted the scalpel but Tobias was quicker and wound himself out of Will's grasp, hitting the young man with his elbow, exactly where his scar was below his clothing. Will crouched forward, hot pain biting at his skin. When Tobias took another swing Will quickly straightened his back and blocked the man's fist with his arm. He managed to inflict a shallow wound with the scalpel before Tobias drew his arm back and jerked the hand with the knife forward, missing Will's side by just a few inches as the man dodged his attack. Tobias grunted angrily and gripped Will's collar to hurl him against the ladder that stood in the corner. Will had a lithe frame and Tobias was strong so he managed it almost effortlessly, but Will was quick to lift the scalpel to Tobias head and managed to slice his cheek open just before he was dashed

against the solid wood. Will bit back a scream; there was a sharp pain in his chest and he was guessing at least two of his ribs were broken. At least he hadn't dropped the scalpel. He tried to get up, but Tobias kicked his throbbing ribs hard before he had the chance to and this time Will did scream.

Hannibal heard the scream. He was in fact, watching the entire scene with calm curiosity. When he had come home, he had immediately sensed the tension in the air. The door to his office had been open and once he had stepped closer he had smelled two familiar scents- one he loved and one he loathed. He had stepped into the doorway just in time to hear Tobias' last words.

I'm not the Chesapeake Ripper.

And then realization in Will's eyes. Before anything else could settle in the stunning blue, Tobias had made his move. Damage had been done; Hannibal's plan needed a renewal once again. But for now there were just two pounding thoughts on his mind. One: Will knew. The man who had grown so important to him now knew him in his entirety. Two: Said man was currently fighting for his life against a pig Hannibal had only left alive because he had appreciated his work. This could be it, the opportunity for Will to start embracing who he truly was, who Hannibal wanted him to become. He could kill Tobias Budge. He wanted to kill him, that much Hannibal could see in his eyes. Tobias was strong and in the clear advantage. Hannibal didn't expect Will to win the fight, what was essential was that he *was* fighting. Aiming to kill. Even now, crouching on the floor in pain, Will didn't make easy prey out of himself. Whenever Tobias tried to come closer, he swung the small scalpel, once coming dangerously close to Budge's throat. The tall man made a disapproving sound and met the up swinging scalpel with his knife this time, slicing the back of Will's hand open, the pain forcing Will to drop the weapon. With a satisfied grin, Tobias bent over him. Time to step in. The game was over. Hannibal quickly crossed the office and set the steak knife he had fetched from the kitchen upon realizing the situation to Budge's neck. Making eye contact with the wounded man on the floor, Hannibal cut Tobias' throat in one fluid motion.

Will had meanwhile regained enough strength to pick up the scalpel and though the pain radiating from his ribs was hardly bearable, he pulled himself up on the ladder and clutched at the scalpel. Hannibal watched him interested, his suit just slightly stained with Tobias blood.

"Will, you are injured. You should lie down," he said softly, calmly, as if he hadn't just been revealed as the Chesapeake Ripper. When he took a slow step towards Will, the empath lifted the scalpel, his other, bleeding hand clutching at the ladder for support.

"Stay back. Come any closer and I swear to God I'll kill you," Will hissed, his voice distorted with pain.

"As much as I regret having to point this out, you surely are very aware by now what I am capable of. You are injured, weakened and in pain, Will. Don't be imprudent," the older man answered calmly.

Hannibal took another step closer and Will tightened his grip around the scalpel. The doctor saw a lot in the young man's eyes in that moment. Pain. Hurt. Betrayal. Desperation. Anger.

Confusion. The one thing he didn't see was fear. Interesting.

"You are a monster. I trusted you," Will spat out, his voice shaky and his eyes filling up with tears. Hannibal couldn't tell whether they came from the physical pain, the emotional pain or the overwhelming anger. Hannibal took another step closer. Will still held the scalpel up, but had made no move to attack so far. The doctor threw a concerned look at the hand clutching at the ladder. The cut was rather deep and the bleeding needed to be stopped. Focusing on Will's eyes again, Hannibal said:

"Will, I hope you understand I cannot allow you to leave."

Will stared at him for a moment, his face blank and expressionless, and then he suddenly dropped the scalpel.

"Fine. Kill me, then. Maybe it's for the best," he said, his eyes dazed and looking through Hannibal, rather than at him. The doctor slid his arms around Will's waist, careful not to apply any pressure to the fractured ribs and stroked over Will back calmingly with one hand, while pulling something out of his sleeve with the other.

"I am not going to kill you Will. You are so much more valuable to me alive," he murmured. Will was completely stiff in Hannibal's embrace and even as the small syringe pierced into his veins he didn't stir. Almost as if he had been expecting it.

When the man went limp in Hannibal's arms, he quickly carried him to the couch and laid him down carefully. He got his first aid kit and dressed the wound on Will's hand tenderly. Hannibal regretted it had to come to this, but he had to accept what he couldn't change and try to make the best of it.

Will looked incredibly peaceful, lying on the couch, unconscious, hurt, vulnerable, and incredibly beautiful, crimson sprays contrasting his pale skin, his dark locks, his pink lips. Hannibal couldn't resist leaning in and kissing those soft, plush lips, knowing it would likely be his last chance for a while.

Chapter End Notes

Well shit. What now, Hannibal?

Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the delay, real life got to me, but I escaped! :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

There was no sound. That was the first thing Will noticed. He was surrounded by absolute silence and that had something extremely unsettling. He opened his eyes and tried to sit up a bit- he was lying, that's the next thing he realized- and groaned, more because he wanted to fill that dire silence than out of pain, although pain played a great part too. His entire torso felt like it was on fire, his scar, his ribs, everything. He looked down at himself. He was topless, that was the third thing he noticed. His pale skin was covered in bruises just where he remembered his ribs cracking. He could feel some sort of ointment on the bruises that smelled of forest. Will lifted his head to look at his hand, which was, as expected, bound. But there was something else around his wrist, other than the smooth white bandage. The fourth thing he realized was that he was tied to the bed with both wrists.

“How are you feeling Will?”

The pain his voice triggered was so much more agonizing than the physical pain Will was in. His voice. That had spoken lies. False promises. Manipulations. Mocks. In this moment, Will was absolutely ragingly furious with how genuine, how concerned, how *caring* Hannibal sounded. After briefly considering the possibility of just not saying a word, Will dropped his head back against the pillows that were decidedly too comfortable and drew in a shaky breath. Breathing hurt, and his voice was slightly pained when he muttered through gritted teeth:

“I suppose considering the fact that the Chesapeake Ripper is holding me captive, I feel surprisingly calm.”

Will would not call him by his name. Monsters didn't deserve humanizations like that. Hannibal let out a barely audible breath that sounded a lot like a disapproving huff. He stepped to the side of the bed and rested his hand on Will's abdomen. The younger man winced out of pain due to the slightest pressure on his bruised body.

“I am not holding you captive, Will. In fact, in the moment I am protecting you.”

Will swallowed and pressed his eyes shut so he didn't have to look at Hannibal.

“I think your understanding of *protection* differs from mine, then.” he hissed and jerked his arms forward forcefully, so that the restraints around his wrists made an ugly sound. Hannibal looked down at him, calm as ever and checked the locks of the restraints while answering.

“You are a wanted fugitive, Will. As far as the FBI is concerned you murdered Tobias Budge.”

Will pressed his lips together tightly and his jaw clenched. Calm. In control. Manipulative. The last piece of the puzzle was there, and the image it showed was Dr. Hannibal Lecter. The young empath tilted his head to look around in the room he was in. It wasn't familiar to him, but everything around him screamed the Chesapeake Ripper's identity to his face.

“We never profiled that the Ripper has a secondary location,” Will said at length and watched Hannibal's reaction. “But this is no secondary location, is it?” he suddenly realized. “You... prepare them down here. Directly underneath your house. Just one door separating any visitor from the truth. Hiding in plain sight,” Will muttered. Hannibal listened and *smiled* before he said:

“There is a lot you never profiled about the Ripper.”

Will looked at him and narrowed his eyes.

“You are an intelligent psychopath. If your killings include torture it's never out of sadism. It's out of symbolism or simple curiosity. You take the lives of people who...present themselves to you. They're nothing but meat to you. Swine, waiting to be turned into something worthy. You are a narcissist, and you like to show off your work. That is why-“ Will paused and swallowed hard. “- you feed your victims to your colleagues, your friends. They praise you and have no idea what it is they're praising. *Hiding in plain sight*. It satisfies you to see them craving what would repel them if they knew the truth. After all, what artist would want to hide his work?” Will inhaled deeply and continued. Hannibal was listening attentively. “You lost someone. At a young age. Someone you cared for. Someone you loved. And you never allowed yourself to love again. That is why, above all other things, the Chesapeake Ripper is lonely.”

A long, heavy silence settled in the room, which Will was now sure was located in Hannibal's basement. The doctor looked at Will intently, his expression not readable, but not masked either. Not anymore. After a while Hannibal cleared his throat.

“If I am an intelligent psychopath, I am not capable of feeling love.”

“Then you're something beyond. Maybe there is no label for what you are,” Will said, his nostrils inflated and Hannibal smiled, *flattered*. When he reached out to take Will's pulse, the young man tried to pull away, but there was nowhere to go.

“Don't touch me,” he hissed and Hannibal sat down on the edge of the bed. The doctor looked at him patiently.

“What are you fighting, Will? Me, or yourself?”

Will didn't answer. He didn't need to answer. Hannibal sighed and stood to walk towards the small door opposite the bed.

“I have a patient, but I will be with you again as soon as I can. You have a slight concussion and three fractured ribs. Try to get some rest,” he said. *I will take care of you* he didn’t say. He didn’t need to.

Will dropped his head into the pillows and allowed the tears he had been holding back to stream down his face. They weren’t tears of grief or pain. They were tears of frustration.

It was a smell that woke him up a few hours later. Without opening his eyes he pursed his lips and said:

“I’m not eating anything you prepared.”

His voice was slightly raspy from sleep and he felt the bed shift as someone sat down on the edge. Will’s eyes flew open. It took a great deal of trust to be comfortable with your eyes closed around someone; knowing you were vulnerable, blind, easy prey. Trust he didn’t have, he had never had and he certainly would never have in Hannibal.

He knew he was lying to himself. He knew he had started developing that sort of trust in the doctor, but now all that was left was emptiness. Will was empty.

An empty canvas waiting to be painted.

“I am not going to let you starve, Will,” the answer came, and the moment Will opened his eyes, Hannibal cupped his face and pressed his thumb down against Will’s jaw to force his mouth open. Will was quick to react and he tilted his head to capture the thumb between his teeth and bit down as hard as he could. The bitter taste of copper coated his tongue as Hannibal withdrew his hand with slightly darkened eyes.

“That was very rude, Will.”

“You’re not going to kill me.”

Will was his weakness, he could see that now. Hannibal could kill him. He probably wouldn’t even grieve him for long. He would continue his life, continue being the Chesapeake Ripper. Hannibal could kill him.

But he wouldn’t.

“Death will not be your punishment,” Hannibal answered and stood up to fetch a small folder. Will looked at it suspiciously, and when he saw it was filled with business cards he understood. It was so meticulous it drew a shaky, sharp laugh from his throat. It was ridiculous. Morbid, but ridiculous.

“You have a list.” It wasn’t a question, it was a statement. Hannibal sat down on the edge of the bed again and browsed through the folder thoughtfully.

“I am going to tell you what each of them did, and you are going to listen. When I am done, you are going to pick the Ripper’s next victim,” he said, his voice calm and even. Will bit

back a gasp. This was his punishment, but it was also his first lesson.

“And what if I don’t?!” he snapped and stared Hannibal directly in the eye.

“Should you refuse to pick, Alana Bloom will be the Ripper’s next victim,” Hannibal answered, returning the stare.

So Will listened and Will picked. He didn’t allow his mind to think, he let himself be ruled by pure instinct without any thinking involved. That worked when Hannibal smiled satisfied, *proud* of his choice. It worked when he watched the Ripper getting ready to hunt. It worked when he returned a few hours later, covered in blood. It worked until he fell asleep. Then, he was no longer in control of his mind.

Will woke with a scream after drowning in an ocean of blood. Hannibal was by his side, stroking through his hair, talking once again in a language Will didn’t understand. He didn’t need to. When the empath calmed down a bit, he started squirming under the doctors calming touch. It was dark in the room, but it felt like Hannibal’s eyes were stronger than darkness, glowing like two torches, lit directly in purgatory.

“Leave me alone,” Will said, his voice barely a sob. Hannibal didn’t. He crouched next to the bed and was just *there*. Comforting him. And Will was glad for it. Hannibal reached out and cupped his cheek, thumbing over his cheekbone and pushed his other hand back through Will’s curls, grounding him, protecting him. The monster that could chase away the monsters.

Needless to say, the next morning Will loathed himself for that feeling of safety. He hadn’t had another nightmare. Not while Hannibal was holding him, but that would make sense. Hannibal himself *was* the nightmare, wasn’t he?

Later that day, or maybe already the next day, Hannibal cooked again. This time Will ate. He was hungry and he didn’t want to have to pick another victim. He had stopped thinking. He didn’t allow himself to. When Hannibal moved to leave, Will brought himself to ask where he was going. He hated asking, but it was extremely lonely in the plain room. Hannibal was the only distraction he got aside from his mind, which he really didn’t want to rely on, but then again that was probably the whole point. Will wondered if he may be developing Stockholm Syndrome but dismissed the thought. After all, he had already had feelings for his abductor *before* he had taken him captive.

“Jack asked me to come in for questioning,” Hannibal answered, collected and not even remotely worried. Of course not. Why would he be. Will tried to picture Hannibal as the devastated lover who guaranteed Jack he had had no idea. The young man couldn’t quite see it, even though he knew Hannibal could and would lie his way through the interview flawlessly.

When he came back in the evening he didn’t mention the interview and neither did Will. Hannibal sat down on the edge of the bed again and watched Will for a while. Will turned his head to stare at the wall opposite rather than at Hannibal. When the silence became too intense, he cleared his throat.

“Why did you kill Franklyn?” Will asked.

“I didn’t kill him. He was busying himself in my office without my knowledge or permission. I found him combing through the books in the gallery. Regrettably, I must have startled him and he fell rather unfortunate.”

Will let out a sharp laugh.

“And Crawford believed that?? So you broke the man’s neck and pushed him over the railing. Staging it as if you were trying to save his life to explain your DNA, I suppose. Isn’t that a bit base for your caliber?”

“I’m afraid there’s very little you know about my caliber.”

“Are you implying you’re more than the Chesapeake Ripper?” Will asked, surprised but hardly shocked. He doubted anything could *shock* him after these last few days. Will quirked one eyebrow and finally turned to face Hannibal. “How many?”

“You know better than to ask me that,” Hannibal answered, his eyes betraying a smile that his mouth didn’t show as Will looked at him.

“I should know better than to talk to you at all,” Will answered and averted his eyes again. The bed shifted a bit as Hannibal stood up and took Will’s hand in both of his. The empath clenched his fist and tried to flinch but the restraints were holding him in place.

“I am sorry it had to come to this, Will. I hope you can forgive me one day,” Hannibal said quietly. Will swallowed and sucked his lower lip into his mouth. The room was silent for a very, very long time until Will spoke with a steady voice.

“It’s not *my* forgiveness you should be hoping for. I’m the least damage you’ve done,” he said and thought of all the victims’ families. Siblings, parents, spouses, children. He had watched the interviews of some of them, seen the loss in their eyes and felt it himself through his empathy. A curse indeed. Hannibal looked at him in earnest.

“Yours is the only forgiveness that matters to me,” he said softly and Will *knew* that it shouldn’t have made him feel the way it did. He *knew* he shouldn’t have felt warm, understood, *found*, but he did. And he couldn’t stand it, couldn’t stand looking at Hannibal, so he closed his eyes and waited until his hand was released and the other walked away.

Will was not going to let Hannibal pull the strings, turn him into a puppet. He wasn’t going to lie there and feel sorry for himself like a pathetic fallen warrior who had already lost. This wasn’t a fight, it was a game, and Will was forced to play. But he wasn’t opposed to cheating.

Look, I created something new; Hannibal framing Will for murder and taking his freedom!.....Oh.

Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

It's a game, but Will and Hannibal have very different ways of playing.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

If Will could trust his sense of time he would say he had been here for about three or four days. His ribs still hurt but Hannibal regularly gave him painkillers, and since he didn't really have another choice he swallowed them. His legs hurt too, from lying around for too long. The only time he had left the bed in the past days was to use the small bathroom that was located directly next to his room, his wrists bound together. They hurt too, since the restraints had bruised his skin. He wasn't stupid enough to struggle against the restraints, most of the bruises had happened in his sleep, when nightmares had caused him to squirm and twist. Will heard the door of the basement open and therefore guessed it was around 6p.m. That was the time Hannibal usually finished his appointments. The doctor's schedule was the only thing Will had to go on to keep track of time, since asking him for a clock would have felt like a defeat. The door to his room opened. When Hannibal stepped close to the bed and placed his hands on one of the restraints, Will looked at him questioningly.

"Surely you would like to shower. I am going to open your restraints now, Will. I don't want to have to fight you so I would welcome it if you didn't try to attack me," Hannibal said and looked down at Will. The young man swallowed and nodded slowly.

He wasn't going to attack Hannibal. Injured and partly under the influence of pain medication as he was, he would be in the clear disadvantage. Hannibal slowly opened the restraints, careful not to brush the healing cut on Will's hand in the process and took a small step back when he was done. Will swallowed again and sat up. When his feet connected with the ground, his soles started prickling unpleasantly but he ignored it and slowly stood up. When Hannibal stepped to his side Will pushed his arm away.

"I can walk on my own," he grunted, although his bruised chest hurt like hell. Hannibal furrowed his brow and motioned towards the door. When they stepped out of the room Will couldn't hold back a gasp. The basement was a lot bigger than he had anticipated, and he couldn't help but think of a torture chamber, seeing the tools and instruments in the dimly lit room. When they reached the stairs Will pursed his lips. It was obvious to him he couldn't climb them himself, not with the aching pain. When he couldn't suppress a groan on the second step, it became obvious to Hannibal too and he stepped closer to Will, guiding the young man's chin up so he met his eyes.

“May I?” Hannibal asked calmly and waited for Will to nod until he carefully slid his arm around the empath’s waist and supported him. They reached the first floor and Hannibal led him to the bathroom, his arm still around his waist. Before he opened the door for Will, he took the bandage off his hand and threw a testing look at the wound.

“Try not to get water on it,” he ordered and stepped aside. Will closed the door behind him and looked around in the pristine cream bathroom. He turned the shower on and carefully opened his trousers and stepped out of his boxers. When the warm water welcomed him, he winced. It stung against his tormented skin. Suddenly Will realized something he hadn’t thought of before. Hannibal had saved his life. Despite everything, he momentarily felt like he owed him gratitude. He had killed a man for him alone. The thought sent an entirely unwanted shiver through Will’s body.

After everything he had done to him, it still sent electrifying shocks through his body when he touched him, and regardless of the fact that he was in the claws of one of the most vicious serial killers in the history of America, he felt *safe*. Apparently Freddie Lounds had been right all this time. He *was* insane.

Freddie Lounds- oh, he didn’t even want to know what she must have been writing about him, now that he had ‘killed’ Tobias Budge.

The thought brought him back to *that* night when he had imagined himself and Ripper killing her, which was really, *really* bad since that had also been the night he had slept with Hannibal; a memory he had been blocking away as good as he could. And now, standing in Hannibal’s shower, his body overly responsive due to medication it was no wonder that the long suppressed memory made his cock harden. Will pursed his lips, determined to ignore the throbbing need, but then he heard music. Woos of favor, Strauss II. And suddenly he knew that this was another game, another test. He briefly wondered if Hannibal’s keen sense of smell had somehow picked up his arousal or if he had just taken a lucky guess. Either way, he knew what effect the memory of their dance would have on Will in his state.

And then the young man realized something else. Hannibal was not playing the piece to mock him, he was playing it to remind him. To remind him of that feeling of closeness, that feeling of...mutual exchange. Everything about it had been earnest, real and pure. The man who had danced with him had not been wearing a mask, but he hadn’t been a monster either. Will remembered and he felt a strong pinch in his chest upon realizing that they had had something. Something pure. Something true, despite the lies. Without another thought he wrapped his hand around his aching cock and started stroking himself. Slower than he usually would have, just like Hannibal had done it *that night*. He remembered how the doctor had tightened his grip, denied him his orgasm, made him *submit*. And he remembered his husky voice, his accent thick as he had murmured into his ear, telling him to *come for him*. By the time the music stopped, Will had spilled his semen onto his hands and a bit onto the cream tiles in the shower. He reached for the showerhead to wash it off but stopped himself. Maybe he could win this game after all. He would do some marking of his own, claim something, *anything*, after Hannibal had taken everything from him. The thought of the pristine doctor having to clean up Will’s mess sent a new wave of arousal through Will and with something like a smile he let his mark stick on the tiles.

There was body wash and shampoo in the shower, both expensive brands, sandalwood-mint scented, and when Will raised the body wash to his nose, the smell confirmed that it were the same products Hannibal used. Will considered for a moment. Another chance for him to play. If Hannibal intended to mark him further, to make him *smell* like the doctor, Will would not do him the favor of playing along. Instead he cleaned himself thoroughly with nothing but water until he smelled purely and primarily of Will. Nothing but his own scent, the very scent he was born with, untouched by any products or colognes. He stepped out of the shower and his gaze lingered on the white bathrobe that hung next to the sink. Another opportunity. Another chance. Three at one go. Instead of putting on the robe, Will wrapped a towel loosely around his hips without bothering to dry off his chest. When he opened the door, Hannibal was already standing there, waiting. If the sight of Will half naked with dripping hair and steamy, wet skin triggered anything in Hannibal, he masked it well. With just one barely visible flicker of his eyes he handed Will dark jeans and a grey V-neck. They were Will's size and the empath guessed Hannibal had bought them for him. With the hint of reluctance he took the clothes and didn't deign another look at Hannibal. He didn't say thank you, or showed any sign of gratitude whatsoever. He knew better than to be rude around Hannibal by now, but he knew; this far he could go to anger the Ripper without overstepping his boundaries. When the bathroom door closed again, Will examined the clothes. They were actually kind of his style. The shirt was a bit tighter than he would wear it, but neither the jeans nor the shirt seemed to be from a posh brand, which Will really appreciated. The thought of how well Hannibal seemed to know him crossed his mind and although Will tried to shut it out, it sent the same warmth through him he loathed himself for having in Hannibal's presence.

When he stepped out of the bathroom, he was surprised that Hannibal led him to the dining room instead of the basement.

"What, no restraints?" Will asked with knitted brows when he sat down on one of the chairs. Hannibal looked at him for a moment before saying:

"You are not my prisoner, Will. I don't want you to feel that way."

"Or you just think I'm already dependent enough not to hurt you," Will said and watched Hannibal's reaction intently. "That's what you're trying to do, isn't it? Make me become dependent. Submissive. *Yours*." Will made sure his tone outright screamed 'that will never happen'. Hannibal stepped closer to the table and the hint of an amused smile tugged at the corners of his lips.

"I'm not trying to turn you into my slave, no," he said calmly. "Has the thought occurred to you that maybe I just trust you enough not to try and hurt me?"

Will let out a sharp laugh that felt like a punch into his bruised torso.

"No, it has not, because honestly, Dr. Lecter; you're smarter than that."

Will winced at himself. He had sworn he wouldn't grant him the intimacy of calling him by his name again. Monsters didn't deserve humanizations. Hannibal had noticed the slip and grinned, visibly pleased.

“Would you like something to eat, Will?”

“You’re making it sound like I have a choice.”

Hannibal’s eyes darkened and for a moment, his patience seemed tested.

“This arrangement would be a lot easier for both of us if you stopped being so reluctant,” he said, his voice dropping low.

“Oh, I have no intention of making this easy,” Will answered harshly. Hannibal sighed and stood up to get the meal he had prepared from the kitchen, leaving Will alone in the dining room for a moment. He could make a run for the door. He could try to find a weapon somewhere in the house. He could look for a phone and call Jack, explain everything to him. But he was aware that Hannibal knew all that too. This was another test, so Will sat still and waited for Hannibal to return. When he did, he was carrying plates and a tray. When he placed a plate in front of Will and took a soft piece of meat from the tray to put it on the young man’s plate, the empath swallowed.

“Is this...” he began hesitantly and thought back to the little folder. Hannibal looked at him questioningly for a moment but Will didn’t finish his sentence.

“It is the victim you picked,” the doctor confirmed and took a seat opposite to Will. He sat and watched how Will slowly picked up his fork, reluctantly, hesitantly. Again, the doctor monitored Will’s expressions and could see a lot of different feelings there. Not among them: Disgust. Interesting.

Will lifted his chin to lock eyes with Hannibal when he raised the fork and opened his mouth for the meat. The sight made Hannibal’s heart flutter slightly. He averted his eyes and picked up his own fork. A few minutes went by in silence.

“You know the Singe Strangler. You used him to get closer to me as the Ripper,” Will suddenly said. *After you’d gotten close to me as Hannibal* he didn’t say. It didn’t matter now. The mask was gone, the illusion shattered.

“I have met Michael Wiss on one or two occasions,” Hannibal answered and took a sip from his wine. Will looked up and wet his lips.

“How long have you been...interested in me?” the young man asked, suddenly aware that that night in Phillip’s Bay probably hadn’t been the first time Hannibal had seen him. The older man seemed to have read his thoughts.

“Privacy is an important courtesy to me, Will. I wouldn’t violate it by secretly watching someone.”

“But you make exceptions for your... dinner guests,” Will remarked and motioned at his plate. Hannibal looked up in amusement.

“Not everyone is worthy of courtesy,” he simply said and took a bite from his meal.

“You *did* know about me though,” Will said, unwilling to let this go.

“You were quite the topic after your hospitalization.”

“That’s not what I meant.”

Hannibal sighed.

“Yes. I knew about you. I made my own inquiries.”

Will furrowed his brow.

“And how is that not violating my privacy?” Will snapped. Hannibal watched him for a while before he slightly shook his head.

“What reaction are you hoping to trigger with your behavior, Will? How will this achieve enhancement? We both know I cannot let you go. You are making this unnecessarily unpleasant.”

“You’re the one that tied me to a bed for four days.”

“After you swore to kill me.”

He didn’t even sound offended. Just calm as always. Will pursed his lips.

“So I suppose we’re even then.” They were far from even, but Will began to realize it wouldn’t do him any good to keep his defiance up.

After they had finished their dinner, Hannibal collected the plates and said apropos of nothing:

“You may sleep in the guestroom tonight, if you like.”

Will furrowed his brow and followed Hannibal into the kitchen.

“Really? I don’t have to sleep in your basement anymore? Aren’t you afraid you might spoil me?”

Before Will knew what was happening, Hannibal shoved him against the counter. He brought three fingers up to press against Will’s bruised ribs, applying enough pressure to make the young man groan pained.

“I could also tie you up again, if that is what you prefer.” Hannibal said, his voice a warning growl directly next to Will’s ear. Will swallowed and spat his next words out through pain-gritted teeth.

“I would very much like to sleep in the guestroom, thank you,” he hissed. The pressure against his lower chest disappeared, but Hannibal still pinned him against the counter.

“You are very welcome. Now, was it that difficult?” he murmured and bit down on Will’s earlobe before pulling back.

And the thing that bothered Will the most, that made him the angriest, wasn't the pain in his chest, or the threat of being tied up again. It was the fact that, when the older man stepped away, Will was hard again. He cursed himself and his body, and when he noticed the pleased look on Hannibal's face he cursed him too. This was far from over. He would not be easy prey.

Chapter End Notes

I swear to god, my house is cursed. It's midnight and there are strange noises in my room but nobody's here except for me... Oh well. Maybe it's a nice ghost and we become friends.

Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

Is insanity contagious, because it seems to be spreading quickly...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Will was pacing around in the guest room. He knew he wouldn't be able to sleep so he'd decided not to waste time trying. He could hear Hannibal downstairs, the man wasn't asleep either. Will wondered if Hannibal ever really slept. It seemed like such a human thing to do.

But Hannibal *was* human. The young empath hated himself for seeing that. He hated himself for being the only one who could see the man behind the monster behind the man. A vicious circle. Hannibal was a lot of things, most of all was he dangerous, but he was also incredibly normally human. Not to an extent of having feelings like remorse or guilt or empathy, but also not having no feelings at all. Will was convinced that Hannibal had the capability to feel love. Fondness. Protectiveness. Care. However psychologically unexplainable. Hell, Will wasn't exactly psychologically explainable either. He heard footsteps in the hall and listened to a door closing. The small streak of light that had been shining through underneath his door, disappeared. So he did sleep. Interesting. Will didn't. At least not that night. He didn't want to fall victim to his nightmares again. Suddenly Will realized something. Technically, he could just leave now. Hannibal was asleep, he could easily break a window should the door be locked; he might even be able to somehow start Hannibal's Bentley. Technically. In reality though, Hannibal had seen it done that Will was a wanted fugitive. Wanted for murder. He hadn't had the reputation of being entirely *sane* to begin with and he could practically hear all the 'I told you so's and the 'I knew it from the beginning's now. Of course no one would question the fact that he, the insane pet freak who slipped into murderers' heads, had killed someone. Of course not. The sudden liberty Hannibal granted him wasn't trust, at least not entirely. It was knowing that he had nowhere to go. He was coaxing him into his new life. A life he had chosen for Will. And the worst part was that something in Will somehow felt like, with time passing, he could begin to like this life better than his old.

Those were the thoughts that were haunting Will until sunrise. When he heard Hannibal working in the kitchen and smelled coffee, he got up and stepped out of the guestroom. It felt weird to move so freely in someone else's house. He felt like an intruder when he made his way downstairs.

"Good morning Will. I hope you slept well," Hannibal said and his tone was reproachful enough to betray he knew exactly that Will hadn't slept at all.

“Morning,” Will mumbled and clenched his fists. He didn’t want Hannibal to worry or care about him; he didn’t need the concern of the man who was to blame for this situation to begin with. He sat down at the kitchen island and watched Hannibal cook. It was a calming and also weirdly arousing sight. When the doctor turned around Will realized he had been staring and quickly dropped his gaze. Simple, scrambled eggs were placed in front of him and Will was actually shocked by the plainness of the dish.

“So is this what it’s gonna be like?” Will asked and hated himself for having to finish the thought. “For....the rest of my life?”

“Will, even I cannot predict the future.”

“But you can plan it out. At least that’s what you like to think.”

“And you think I plan for your future to be in this house until you die?” Hannibal asked casually.

“I think you plan for my future to be with you until the day I die. You don’t want me to have anything in my life that isn’t you,” Will replied dryly.

In a strange way this was exciting. He got to profile, watch and understand the Chesapeake Ripper in his comfort zone and he learned something new every day. Hannibal’s extreme possessiveness had become clear to him the previous night. His head was still working on the Ripper’s profile, even now, while being in his captivity. It wasn’t something he could just turn off.

Hannibal merely smiled at Will’s answer. He made no attempt to deny or confirm what the empath had said, and that was all the confirmation Will needed. When they were done with breakfast, Will realized with a look at the kitchen clock that it was 11am; usually Hannibal would already be gone. Will therefore concluded that it was Saturday or Sunday. When Hannibal led him to the porch door, Will froze and stared at him uncertainly.

“What are you doing?” he asked warily when Hannibal opened the door, a pleasant wave of warmth streaming in.

“It is a wonderful day. I thought you might enjoy a few hours in the sun,” Hannibal said and frowned at Will’s reluctant stare. “Will, I have already told you, you are not my prisoner,” he murmured and stepped out onto the porch. After brief consideration, Will followed reluctantly. Hannibal sat down in a comfortable looking armchair and motioned at the one opposite with a smile. Will stared into the sky, craving the feeling of warm sunlight on his skin and sat down next to Hannibal. The young man closed his eyes and tilted his head towards the sun. Even without looking, he knew that Hannibal was watching him. It was silent for a long time until Will spoke, his eyes still closed.

“Who did you lose?”

Another phase of silence stretched, and just when Will was sure Hannibal wasn’t going to answer, the doctor suddenly said:

“My sister.”

His voice was silent but otherwise didn't betray any emotions. Will wondered if his face would, but he resisted looking and kept his eyes closed.

“I'm sorry,” he said after a while. He wasn't going to ask how he'd lost her; he knew it must have been bad. When he felt a warm hand on his, he winced but didn't pull back. Hannibal was stroking small circles over the back of his unwounded hand and Will leaned back and let him.

“Destruction always creates, despite the loss it causes,” Hannibal said softly.

“What did your sister's death create?” Will asked although he knew the answer. He finally opened his eyes to look at Hannibal when the doctor met his gaze at him and replied:

“Me.”

Destruction creates destruction.

*

Will had always liked to wear a slight stubble. During his time at Phillip's Bay however, he had learned to get used to shaving every morning, just as the restaurant required. All the more did his more than *slight* stubble annoy him now, but he wouldn't ask Hannibal if he could shave. He wouldn't ask anything of Hannibal, it would mean to accept the hierarchy the doctor undoubtedly desired. It would be degrading. Maybe he was being paranoid, but even something so simple as asking for shaver seemed like letting Hannibal win a round of the unsettling game they were playing. What he could do however, was to provokingly rub or scratch over the stubble whenever possible, until one day; Will was guessing it was about three weeks after the incident with Budge, Hannibal set the knife down next to the cutting board and the lettuce he had been working on to look at Will intensely, while the younger man was rubbing one hand over his chin.

“Perhaps you would like to shave?” Hannibal offered, staring at him with an unreadable expression. Will considered for a moment. If he had offered it himself, it wasn't really letting him win, was it?

“I would,” he answered hesitantly, warily awaiting Hannibal's reaction. The doctor smiled and led him to the bathroom, motioning at the drawer. When Will opened it, he found an old fashioned straight razor and shaving cream. Not an electric shaver, a *straight razor*. Of course. Another game then. Needless to say, Will had no clue how to shave with the outdated thing, but he wouldn't let Hannibal win. He'd rather cut his own throat than ask the older man for help. Will reached for it and stared at the blade intimidated. Hell, he probably *would* cut his own throat with this thing. He tilted it a bit and saw Hannibal's reflection in the shiny blade, standing behind him and observing. Will cocked his head.

“It seems unwise to provide me with a weapon. I could just kill you now,” he said at length, watching Hannibal's reaction in the small reflection.

“You could try,” the doctor confirmed calmly. “I am unarmed, you would very likely succeed.”

“Slice your throat. Make you taste your own blood.” Will spat the words out, but his expression remained calm, and so did Hannibal’s.

“How would killing me make you feel?” Hannibal asked and held Will’s gaze in the reflection. Will stared at him and was silent for a few moments. How would it feel? Relieving. Righteous. Final.

Final.

The young man closed the blade and lowered his head.

“It would be a shame,” he said bitterly and put the razor down next to the sink “to ruin your carpet.”

He knew Hannibal was smiling but he didn’t turn around. When the doctor made no move to leave, Will narrowed his eyes and opened the shaving cream, determined to go through with this or die trying. It went ok for the first few minutes, but suddenly there was blood on his jawline. He hadn’t even felt the cut. When he met Hannibal’s eyes in the mirror he was surprised. Instead of the triumphant look he had been expecting, the doctor seemed solely worried as he eyed the young empath. Hannibal cleared his throat.

“Would you allow me to assist?”

“No”

Will stared at the mirror disconcerted. He met Hannibal’s eyes again; dark, worried and somewhat amused, and suddenly he couldn’t quite remember why he was being so reluctant. It was just a shave after all. It wasn’t like the fact that he accepted help from Hannibal automatically meant that he had forgotten what the man was. It didn’t mean Will would lose. It wouldn’t be an admission of any kind. There was no hidden meaning to all this. It was just a shave.

When he was just about to agree, he realized something and froze. He was walking right into his trap. Hannibal truly was a master of manipulation. He had planned this out *really* nicely. Will *couldn’t* win. If he accepted Hannibal’s help, he put him in a position of extreme trust and power. One doesn’t just let anyone near their jugular with a blade. One definitely doesn’t let the *Chesapeake Ripper* near anything with a blade. However, if he kept going, he would end up with tons of cuts and wounds. The punishment for his reluctance would be directly included in the act. Submit and accept; you don’t get hurt, resist and balk; you bleed. Simple. Manipulative. And not even a direct threat, because in the end, Will would be the one holding the razor. In fact, the only rational thing the empath could think of doing was to wash the cream off and walk away.

“Fine. Do what you want.”

Will had never been one for rationality.

Hannibal's face was the very definition of *pleased* when Will sat down on the small stool and extended his hand with the razor. When the doctor took it, their fingers brushed *very* intentionally. Hannibal wet a tissue and carefully wept the blood away from Will's jaw, his touch light and soft. When he stroked a thumb over Will's cheekbone, the young man had to remind himself that that exact hand had ended *so many lives*. Had caused *so much pain*.

"It doesn't make it ok, you know," he said quietly. "You can't just hide behind the concept of destruction. It's not an excuse." A fresh layer of shaving cream was applied to his skin carefully, and Will had to physically stop himself from sighing at the soft touch.

"Mankind entertains excuses to cauterize guilt," Hannibal answered and tipped Will's chin up until his throat was bared to him.

"But guilt is an alien sensation to you," Will stated and swallowed heavily when the cold blade pressed against his throat. The razor ghosted over his skin smoothly, barely more than a soft caress.

"Guilt is regret that blends into self-hatred. I generally restrain myself from actions that would trigger regret."

Will closed his eyes and thought about Hannibal's words while the blade danced over his skin with such gentleness he hardly felt its sharpness. It wandered over his Adam's apple, along his jawline, across his cheeks. Some minutes later, a soft towel was smoothed over his skin and wept the remains of shaving cream away. He heard a clink when the razor was placed on the sink. The towel disappeared and Hannibal's hand sprawled over the side of his neck, his fingers spread, his thumb caressing his freshly-shaven cheek. Will felt the doctor's exhales as the man leaned closer. The empath didn't open his eyes. He didn't pull away. He waited. When warm lips met his, he kissed back. After a long moment of nothing but silence and warmth, Hannibal pulled back and Will opened his eyes.

The doctor was standing by the sink and cleaned the razor calmly. Will watched him for a while and thought about what he just did.

"So do I," he said.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading everyone <3

If you'll excuse me now, I'm going to stick my head in a bucket of ice. *has the worst headache ever*

Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

Um... ok, I know that was quite long... I'm sorry...? I can explain; it was the last week of school and just really stressful and I didn't have any time to update. Sorry.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Will didn't sleep the next night. Whenever he closed his eyes he felt lips on his, sinful and ominous. The forbidden fruit. Poison that tainted the perception. That made the snake seem like a friend rather than the monster it was.

But only what was pure could be tainted. Will's perception was far from pure. Crimson shadows were lurking everywhere, coating his eyes to make him see. See the truth. The only taint was truth. Truth that Will never asked for and never would have wanted. Yet he had gotten it. Hannibal had granted him truth. But nothing in life comes without a price, and this, having a monster in his head, in his heart, under his skin, this was the price he had to pay for revelation.

The lights in the hall had been out for almost an hour now and the house was silent, almost eerily so. It was long past midnight, and maybe one could blame the lack of sleep. Maybe one could deny what was so obvious. *Maybe*, Will thought as he opened his door and stepped out of his room. There was no light from underneath Hannibal's door, but Will somehow doubted he was asleep. When he silently opened it, he immediately felt the Ripper's fiery gaze on him. Will was taken aback once again by the way Hannibal's eyes seemed to glow in the dark, just as much as they glowed in the light. The doctor was, as far as Will could see through the veil of darkness, lying in his bed and returning Will's stare. Neither of them said a word, and Hannibal didn't move when Will slowly approached the bed. Solely those eyes followed every one of his movements. When the young man lifted the blanket and slipped into the bed, Hannibal extended one arm and wrapped it around Will. Will pressed himself close, burying his face in Hannibal's chest. The older man held him tightly and Will could hear his calming heartbeat. They stayed like this, and with a sudden feeling of peace, Will fell asleep.

The sensation of soft lips pressing against his forehead was what woke him the next morning. He blinked and remembered where he was. Not just in Hannibal's house, in Hannibal's bed, in the room he'd only been in once, before he had left in a cowardly fit of panic. It seemed like ages ago. Another life. A different reality. Will remembered why he had left back then.

Good things don't last.

How right he had been. Or had he?

Good things...evolve. They change. But it's up to you what you make of it. If you make them last.

But what if the good thing had never been good to begin with? What if the good thing had been the dark shadow, hidden behind a blinding bright light? Could a bad thing be a good thing?

Will didn't really know what to feel but he knew it didn't feel like a bad thing to wake up to affection instead of loneliness. The young man slowly opened his eyes, his lids still heavy with sleep. Hannibal was standing next to the bed, dressed and neat as always, a mug in one hand and a bag in the other. Will looked up at him through his lashes. The sun was already up and shining through the window, lighting Hannibal's hair up in the most stunning way. Will wondered if Hannibal saw the sun the way he did. The way other people did. If he could appreciate light when all he had was darkness. He owned darkness. A quote popped into his head. Without really thinking about it, he turned to stare at the sun and muttered:

"Sadness flies on the wings of the morning and out of the heart of darkness comes the light."

He heard a small noise as the mug was placed on the nightstand. The bag was placed on the ground and then the bed shifted. Hannibal sat down on the edge of the bed and a hand fondled with the curls at the base of Will's neck. He could feel the doctor's gaze on him and cleared his throat.

"My mother used to read Jean Giraudoux to me. It's one of the few things I remember about her. I think he was her favorite writer."

He wasn't sure why he had told him, but then again he wasn't sure why he was lying in his bed and allowing him to stroke through his hair. Hannibal was silent for a while before he answered:

"She must have been a very intelligent woman."

Will thought about that quite a while. She probably had been. Leaving him and his father behind; however unfair, had definitely been the smartest thing she could have done.

"I wouldn't know. She didn't stay long enough for me to find out."

He hadn't meant for it to sound bitter, he really hadn't, but it did anyway.

"Often the people who leave us are those who stay with us the longest."

"Only if you let them."

"And why would you deny yourself the memory of someone you loved?"

"I don't deny myself, I deny them."

“You seem convinced they do not deserve to be remembered. Perhaps that is true, but you deserve better than to forget.”

Will huffed and sat up, Hannibal’s hair sliding out of his hair as he did, and faced the doctor in earnest.

“Forgetting is losing a part of yourself. I don’t see why that should have to be a bad thing.”

“When you lose part of yourself it leaves a void where once a memory would have covered the depth. Should you fall after forgetting there will be nothing there to catch you.”

“And when I fall before forgetting I fall into a memory that might leave a void of its own.”

Hannibal reached for Will’s hand and interlaced their fingers before raising it and softly kissing each knuckle.

“Then find something to fill the void,” he murmured against Will’s skin.

Without paying much thought to it, the young man leaned in and pressed a light, but lingering kiss to the corner of Hannibal’s mouth. When he wanted to pull back, Hannibal let go of his hand and grasped the back of his neck instead to hold him in place. He turned his head, his lips slowly brushing along Will’s. The empath shivered and felt a smile against his lips before Hannibal pulled back.

“Get dressed. I want to show you something,” the doctor said and stood. When he had left the room, Will’s gaze lingered on the door for a while longer before he dropped his head back against the pillows and buried his face in both his hands.

What was he doing?

What was he becoming?

Will tried to silence his mind and pressed his palms against his closed eyes forcefully. He told himself he didn’t have a choice. He told himself that he was doing what he was doing to stay alive. To stay well. He knew Hannibal could hurt him. He knew he was in the claws of a monster.

And he knew that wasn’t the reason he had kissed him. Or came to him in the middle of the night. Or felt safe.

This wasn’t manipulation, as much as Will wanted it to be. It wasn’t survival instinct. It was simple affection. Affection for a monster.

He needed to get out of here, to get away from this, from Hannibal, from his feelings before he would do something he would regret. Sooner or later something would happen. Something wrong. He had to flee the darkness before it swallowed him entirely.

But it was so comforting.

The darkness was his safe haven. A port for a ship that had long sailed stormy seas without the chance of finding ground to anchor. A place of safety. The end of forlornness. A home.

But the water in the port was full of sharks, their eyes red as the blood that stuck to their teeth. Hunger was plaguing them. Instead of being afraid of the sharks, Will empathized with them. They were longing so painfully much. The ship couldn't sail off again. It couldn't leave the poor monsters behind. They needed it.

Feed them. Fulfill their longing. End their pain. End your search for ground. You've found it, and the waiting monsters welcome you with open arms. Comfort. Home.

Will snapped out of his reverie and groaned as he rose from the bed. His ribs still hurt, although the bruises were fading to a faint yellow and would soon be gone completely. He examined the bag on the floor and found an entire pile of new clothes, mostly plain, just as Will liked, but then there were also some shiny, silken button-ups. He ran his hand over one of them, black and smooth, fabric flowing between his fingers like soft fluid. He didn't question his decision when he stood up and put it on; rather than one of the simple, plain shirts.

When he stepped out of the bedroom, a delicious smell pulled him towards the kitchen. Hannibal stood by the stove and let his eyes wander over Will when he turned around. His smile was genuine and pleased and it seemed to grow wider when Will pursed his lips and looked away. The shirt proved that Will was starting to accept. To adept. The young man cleared his throat and Hannibal tore his gaze back to the pan in front of him.

"What were you going to show me?" the empath asked and sat down opposite from where Hannibal was standing. The doctor smiled and put a plate in front of Will.

"Patience, Will. I will not allow you to carry on your unhealthy habit of skipping breakfast."

"Living with you, I don't really have the option of carrying on any habits of mine anyway."

"You are free to do whatever you like as long as it does not compromise your safety," Hannibal answered with furrowed brows and sat down opposite Will.

"I don't suppose waking up in the bed of a serial killer is a habit one would call safe," the young man replied, avoiding Hannibal's gaze and therefore missing the flash in his eyes and the tug at the corners of his mouth.

"Are you implying that you intend to make said action a habit?"

Will looked up, his eyes narrowed.

"This hasn't been about what I want since you brought me here. It hasn't been about what I want since I've *met* you. You manipulated me. You cultivated want."

"It is not within my power to cultivate feelings in another person, Will. What you feel are desires purely of your own mind's making."

"Desires you gladly encouraged."

“Desires I welcomed. Because they are based on reciprocity.”

“And what if they weren't? What would you have done with me? I find it hard to believe you'd accept rejection. If you're convinced you can't cultivate feelings, how would your plan have worked out if I wouldn't have developed them?”

A long pause followed the angry rush of words Will had spat across the table.

“My plan didn't include hurting you, Will, no matter what extent your feelings for me would have reached, or not reached, to be precise.”

“But maybe you would have had no other choice. Don't lie to me, Hannibal. We both know it weren't my injuries that stopped me from attacking you when I had the chance to. We both know fear wasn't the reason behind me dropping the scalpel.”

“If you wouldn't have seen reason to drop the scalpel, I would have been forced to protect my freedom,” Hannibal mused. “Let us avoid to dwell on possibilities, Will. You didn't hurt me and therefore I was spared of having to hurt you.”

“Physically,” Will added quietly.

Hannibal frowned and stood to walk over to Will. He cupped his cheek and led the young man's head up so their eyes met. Will tried to flinch, but Hannibal's grip was iron as always, so instead he closed his eyes defiantly. Whatever emotion there was in Hannibal's eyes, he didn't want to see it. He didn't want to acknowledge or believe it.

“Will. Look at me,” Hannibal ordered, his voice firm. When the young man didn't react he sighed and crouched down in front of him. “Will, I intend to apologize to you. I hope you understand that this is a very rare courtesy for me. It would be rude to deny me eye contact in return,” he said softly and waited until the thick, dark lashes fluttered and revealed the stunning blue he admired so much.

“There was a time where I had planned your end just as I had planned the rest of your story. A time where meeting me had meant your inevitable death. But I underestimated you and the effect I wasn't aware another human being could have on me. You changed me, Will. Since long, hurting you in any way has not been an option to me and I truly am sorry for failing my intentions and causing you pain nonetheless.”

And Will stared into Hannibal's eyes, searching for the mask that had once blocked his view from the truth and finding nothing. Nothing but sincerity, and he thought that this might have been the most sincere Hannibal had ever been to him. To anyone. Will swallowed hard and fought for words.

“Thank you,” the young man finally said. “For being honest with me.”

Hannibal looked into his eyes a moment longer, tenderly, fondly; his gaze caressing Will's soul, before he straightened his back and walked back to his seat. After a while, he spoke again, his voice even and the emotion from before nothing more than a memory again.

“Honesty has the capacity to be both important and fatal. Are you willing to be honest to yourself, Will? Will you stop suppressing your instincts when you see what I am about to show you?”

Will didn't answer. He didn't know what he was about to see yet, so the question could only have been rhetorical. He felt an unsettling, apprehending weight in his stomach.

Whatever he was about to see, it would be important.

And fatal.

Chapter End Notes

Please tell me I'm not the only fannibal who still couldn't bring herself to watch the finale a second time? Even the thought hurts too much. Ugh I feel so weak :C

Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

Quite a lot of conflict

Chapter Notes

Hey my furballs (I just decided that's your nickname, take it or leave it)
I'm really sorry for not really updating all that much lately, everything's a bit stressful atm. I know a lot of you are waiting for the next chapter of Rare Desires and I know it's been far too long since I've updated. I hope I'll get it done some time next week. I also want to apologize for not replying to comments lately, I kind of lost track.... but anyway, thanks for sticking with me, you don't know how much it means to me xx <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

When Will followed Hannibal into the basement he had spent the first few days of his captivity in, he couldn't help but feel a slight anxiety upon remembering the deadly tools and devices that awaited them. The basement was dark, but before Hannibal turned on the light for Will to *see*, the young man could *smell*. He smelled the very familiar scent of death with just the hint of impending decay; a devilish cologne he had grown so accustomed to in years of hunting murderers. When the light flickered on and bathed the room in glaring brightness, Will could see the source of the smell and his stomach turned. He took a step closer to the silver table, without being aware he did, and stared down at the lifeless body in front of him. He didn't know how long he was standing like this until he could manage to speak.

"He had a family," the young empath brought out, his voice shaky as he tried to stop his breath from becoming rapid when he realized what Hannibal wanted to show him.

While the older man walked around the table calmly and started to prepare several tools, Will continued to stare at the body. It was the father who had been to Phillip's with his family what seemed like a lifetime ago. The young empath remembered his children, the little girl who hated fish and the boy who made a toy out of everything, and what had once been annoyance turned into sympathy and pity as he felt what they felt; the loss, the grief, the uncertainty if they would ever see their father again.

"You took him from them," Will said quietly, still unable to look away from the face that had once smiled at a wife reassuringly, lovingly.

“He was very unkind to them, Will. He neglected his children and was a poor husband to his wife.”

Will finally looked up to stare at Hannibal.

“That didn’t give you the right to end his life.”

“This isn’t about ending. It is about converting. There was not much service he could have done the world in his living state.”

“That’s not for you to decide,” Will snapped and took a step back, not out of fear or contempt, simply a gesture of reluctance.

“The decision was taken from me the moment I saw him in Phillip’s Bay. A feast must present itself, and he did, effectively.”

“I don’t know what you hope to achieve with this, but I am not going to take any part in your display. I might not be able to stop you, but you can’t force *me* to do this.”

Hannibal smiled at him mildly.

“Will, there is no need to hide your desires from me. I dropped my mask for you. Will you return the courtesy?”

“I’m not mutilating a body.” Will answered sharply, his tone turning desperate as he continued: “I.... His wife and kids, Hannibal... They’re *in my head*.”

“Then... silence them” Hannibal said at length and extended one hand, holding out a scalpel to Will.

The young man looked at him aghast and slowly shook his head, taking another step back, bringing enough distance between him and the scalpel until he was sure he couldn’t reach it.

“No.”

Hannibal sighed and slowly walked around the table, approaching Will who was staring at the body again. The doctor stopped just inches away from Will and saw his Adam’s apple bob as the empath swallowed hard.

“I can’t... I can’t *want* this, Hannibal. Don’t make me want this,” he muttered under his breath, his voice weak and helpless. Hannibal slid his free hand down Will’s spine and wrapped it around the young man’s hipbone. He carefully took a step forward, pushing Will closer to the table until they were standing above the body, Will’s back pressed into Hannibal’s chest. Hannibal nuzzled at Will’s curls and murmured into his ear:

“As I told you Will, I cannot cultivate desires. Whatever developments you are making, they do not lie within my power.” With those words, he pushed the scalpel into Will’s grasp, curling his own fingers around Will’s to keep the tool where it was and guided it down to the skin that covered a once beating heart.

Even though Hannibal was leading the scalpel, the first cut was hesitant, shallow, as Will's fingers tensed and squirmed, trying to pull out of Hannibal's strong grasp. When the blade pushed through flesh, Will whimpered softly at the feeling and at the sight as a single drop of blood appeared at the edge of the small cut. The next cut was more determined, more controlled. Will could feel Hannibal's breath against his neck, the curve of his body pressing and fitting perfectly against his and his fingers, strong, warm and calloused, guiding his hand, guiding the scalpel through layers of skin and flesh confidently.

His hand was steady under Hannibal's capable fingers, but the rest of his body was trembling by the time they could start to see inside the man on the table. Their hands were meanwhile covered in blood and Will tensed as the scalpel cut deep enough to reveal a rib bone. Hannibal tangled his free hand in Will's curls and whispered reassuring words into his ear.

"You're doing so well, my love." he murmured admiringly and planted a soft kiss right above Will's ear.

Will's swallowed convulsively and tried to stop seeing the man in front of him as a person, tried to make it easier, tried to see him as a pig, a tool chosen to create something better. He tried to let go of the part of his brain that was light, to fall into the darkness, tried to stop blocking the thoughts and desires that had haunted him all his life.

He remembered his hallucination about killing Freddie Lounds.

Did you see yourself as the Ripper?

Yes and no. I could feel every twitch with my own hands, but I didn't feel like I had any control.

Hannibal guided his hand deeper into the man on table, skin and blood sticking to both their fingers.

I didn't want him to stop.

"Stop."

The single word resonated through the basement, and although it had been a mere whisper, Will felt like he had almost screamed. Hannibal stiffened behind him, and for a moment Will thought something was going to happen. Something both of them would regret. If they would both survive it. But instead, Hannibal let go of his fingers and took a step back, leaving Will's back to a free fall into coldness and darkness. Will drew in a shaky breath and let the scalpel slip from his hand. He avoided to dart another glance at the body and turned to rush out of the basement. Hannibal didn't try to stop him, but Will could feel the man's disappointment clutching to him and dragging him down, making each step harder to take. He wanted to run back into the basement. To finish the job and lick the blood off Hannibal's hands. To make him proud.

What was he becoming?

Will was sitting on the porch and staring at the sky when Hannibal approached him. The younger man didn't know how Hannibal was going to handle his sudden retreat from before and couldn't help feeling a bit uneasy as the doctor sat down next to him and stayed silent for a while.

"I was hoping you would meanwhile understand, Will. The man was a gift for you, just as every Ripper victim since you provided your help on the case. When will you finally allow yourself to open it?"

"I respectfully decline your *gift*, Dr. Lecter."

Will's voice was still unsteady, and he winced when Hannibal gripped his arm tight enough to bruise.

"I do not accept your declination," Hannibal answered sharply. "I see you, Will. All I want is for you to see yourself."

"I do see myself. But maybe your perception of me differs from my own. I am not like you."

"You are not like the person you pretend to be either. Tell me, Will, how did it make you feel? To see the skin give in under your touch, to see the man open up to you like a book waiting to be read?"

Will winced at every word and tried to pull away from Hannibal's tight grip.

"Is there really too much reluctance in you, too much pride to admit how good it felt? I have offered you every opportunity to embrace your desires, yet you keep denying who you are," the doctor continued to speak.

He tightened his grasp around Will's arm before he let go and leaned back in his chair, staring at Will, his crimson eyes cold and suddenly masked again. Something inside Will broke. Little fragments started flying around and he couldn't really grasp any of them. There were so many emotions. Anger. Fear. Irritation. Reluctance. Longing. Guilt. He felt guilty. He felt guilty for disappointing Hannibal. And that made him feel sick. What was he becoming? When he looked up to meet the older man's eyes, it became clear which emotion had won the fight for dominance.

"I'm sorry," Will said quietly.

Hannibal's features softened a bit and he stood and motioned Will to follow him back inside.

"Come. You will get cold," he said gently and placed his hand between Will's shoulder blades to lead him through the door.

Back inside, Will sat down on the couch and glanced at Hannibal warily. He had apologized, but he had no intention of going back into the basement. Apparently, Hannibal had other plans anyway. Will watched how the older man fetched a small leather bag from the bedroom and put it next to the front door. When he turned and took his coat out of the closet, Will pursed his lips.

“Where are you going?”

“I will likely not return until tomorrow. Please help yourself to anything in the fridge should you get hungry,” was the only answer he received as Hannibal put on his coat without sparing a glance at Will. The young man frowned and glared at the doctor.

“That didn’t answer my question,” he muttered. Hannibal looked up and returned his stare.

“It was not my intention to do so. I have been patient but since you seem to have no interest in my answers I am not going to provide them to you anymore.”

Will couldn’t hold back a sharp laugh that came out as a huff.

“The silent treatment, Dr. Lecter? Hardly therapeutic, is it?”

Hannibal’s eyes narrowed, a movement so subtle it was hardly visible, and he turned and left the house, locking the door emphatically. Will leaned back against the couch and stared up at the ceiling blankly. He felt terrible and didn’t know why. He had done the right thing after all, hadn’t he? What was ‘right’ even anymore? The world wasn’t black and white and when living with Hannibal it was nothing but crimson. Wouldn’t it have been easier to just give in? There was nothing he could have done for the man. He was dead, one might as well make it worth it.

Will startled. Worth it? Were these even his own thoughts? Hannibal’s voice was in his head a lot more often than he cared to admit, but had it come this far? Could the man control his thoughts, insert his own without Will realizing? The empath chewed on his lower lip. He almost laughed at the fact that he suddenly felt like he was being unfair to Hannibal. Unfair to the Chesapeake Ripper. Conflicting as it was, it was true. He couldn’t blame Hannibal for all the monsters that hid in the shadows of his thoughts.

I cannot cultivate desires.

Hannibal might have manipulated him, sculpted him, formed him, but one couldn’t form if the substance wasn’t already malleable. All his life, he had been balancing along the edge of cliff, just waiting for something to push him. Hannibal had pushed him. But he hadn’t let him drop. He had waited in the darkness and caught him before he could hit the ground. Protected him. Saved him. Anchored him.

What would have been worse? Giving in or doing what he had done- walking away, denying himself? Who was he to determine right from wrong? What was there to possibly go by? The law, often being the biggest crime itself? Or religion, excusing all kinds of things with the plans of something superior, even though mankind had no way of knowing those plans? Or maybe society, desperately clutching at tradition, at the known, following rules without a question simply because they had been there for so long? In the end there was only one’s own conscience to rely on. And Will’s conscience was telling him that he would feel better now if he would have complied. He would have sated his own desire, he would have made Hannibal proud and he would have given the dead man a purpose. But would it have been the right thing to do? Just because it would have been easy didn’t mean it would have been right. Will wasn’t sure what he was struggling against, but he knew he had to keep the conflict up until

either side would win. A decision had to be made. Who was he? Who did he want to be? Hannibal had opened a door for him, more than that, he had offered to carry him through it. The doctor might be the one holding him captive, but the thing that was truly caging him was Will himself. He was caging himself because to unlock the bars would be to acknowledge the fact that Hannibal wasn't holding him captive. That he *wanted* to stay. The conflict raged on. What was the right thing to do? Stay or run? He wasn't sure if he could do either.

Suddenly he heard a sound. Scratching and then a distinct click. The small noise sounding oddly triumphant. He heard the front door opening, heard careful footsteps in the hallway and then a familiar voice hesitantly calling out.

“Mr. Graham?”

A decision had to be made.

Chapter End Notes

Ooops was that a cliffhanger? *evil laugh*

Hey, also y'all should totally go listen to 'Hurt' by Christina Aguilera like, right now. I know everyone knows that song, but have you ever actually LISTENED to the lyrics??? I swear to god, it's a post-finale-hannigram-monologue....

Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

A decision had been made.

Chapter Notes

Dark Will is doing things to me... Also that bathroom scene we've all been waiting for since chapter 9.

Will was standing in the basement, right next to the table where the corpse of the allegedly rude father still lay. He felt calm, the conflict over, the war won. The only remain of the struggle some scattered, silent doubts. Wounded soldiers mourning their loss. The loss of light. The loss of sanity? Maybe. Will didn't care. Of all the things he could call himself now, he was sure 'insane' was one of the least scandalizing. He stood, surrounded by darkness, filled with darkness and waited. A decision had been made. Had been forced. He had decided to protect. To defend. To turn from victim into predator.

He heard footsteps coming closer to the basement door. Step by step down into the darkness, the same way he had gone minutes earlier, right after the voice had called out, right after the decision had been made. The door opened and he caught a glimpse of the red locks he had already been expecting. The next thing he saw was a poor looking teaser, extended in a purple-gloved hand, cautiously raised as if it could do anything to save her life in case of an attack. An attack by the Chesapeake Ripper, who she surely already knew was the owner of the basement she was currently standing in.

When she saw the tools and the corpse, she gasped. Then her eyes caught Will. She dropped the hand holding the teaser and seemed almost *relieved*.

"Will," she exclaimed, formalities forgotten. Will just looked at her, eyes empty and face blank. She took a step closer and had the nerve to raise her camera and take a picture of the corpse on the table before saying:

"It's him, isn't it? It's Lecter. He framed you and took you captive," she muttered under breath and took another picture, her mind probably already forming a headline. Too busy with her story to realize the flaws. To realize Will wasn't a prisoner. Turning Will from monster into victim on her blog, while in real life the process had happened vice versa. After one last picture, she finally reached for her phone. "I'm calling Jack," she said.

Too late did she realize her mistake. The phone was knocked out of her hand, landing on the tiles hard.

“You shouldn’t have come here, Freddie,” Will said, his voice low and calm enough to make the hair on the back of her neck stand up. It was a threat so clear and sharp it cut through the dim basement like a sword. She fought for words and took a step backwards, away from him, as far away as possible. Anything, anything as barrier between them. Just away from his predatory gaze. Had she gotten it wrong? Or maybe she had just come too late. A decision had been made. She couldn’t save Will Graham, this wasn’t her place to be a hero anymore. Not her story anymore. It had been reckless to come. She should have called Jack beforehand, but this had been *hers*. Her story. Not anymore. Her story was about to end. She couldn’t save Will. She couldn’t save herself.

“Will,” she stammered out. She knew better than to appeal to his humanity, knowing that when she would look into his eyes she would only see Lecter staring back at her. “Will, please don’t do this. You’re not a killer. I can call Jack, we can get out of here, he won’t find you; everything will be alright. I won’t say anything-“

“Oh, Freddie. I’m disappointed. After years of practice, *this* is the best lie you can come up with? Try again.”

“Will!” she breathed as a hand wrapped around her throat. “I was wrong about you. I’m sorry for everything I wrote. You were the victim in this. I can make it up to you! You can tell your side of the story, I can clear your name.”

“No, Freddie,” he said, his voice low and almost...amused? “*You* are the victim in this.”

It was only then that she realized the teaser had long been yanked out of her hand and lay on the floor next to her phone. The hand tightened and cut off her air supply. She tried to scream, the sound stifled by a gasp as her body urged her to get oxygen, no matter how just *breathe*. She wasn’t one to go down without a fight. Will was a lot stronger and a lot calmer than she was, she knew she didn’t have much of a chance but if the last thing she ever did was to try and take out a criminal she would at least have made a point. She wasn’t sure what point, but it didn’t matter. All that mattered was to hurt him bad enough for him to loosen his grip for just a second. Just one, small breath. She jerked her knee up but missed his stomach as he dodged her attack.

“How predictable, Ms. Lounds,” he rebuked and added a second hand, his fingers melting into her skin and her throat on fire. Air. Just one breath. Air.

She shook her hand once, twice, until her leather glove fell off, and formed a claw. Her hand darted upward and she scratched, leaving deep, red stripes on his cheek, his blood trickling over her fingers. His grip loosened for a moment, presumably more out of surprise than out of pain, but she could manage to swallow a hasty breath. When his hands tightened again, a lot more forceful than before, the small rush of air she had stolen seemed like a minor victory. She heard herself gag, heard herself gasp and choke as she tried to stay quiet to at least deny him that satisfaction, but her body no longer listened. Her sight got blurry and she tasted bile in her mouth as she continued to gag. A thumb was swiped across her cheekbone and it felt ridiculously like a fond caress, while his other fingers kept squeezing the life out of her.

Suddenly there were black edges, dark shadows in the corners of her eyes. She knew it wouldn't be long now and found herself begging, the only voice she had left a silent one inside her head, unable to speak but still able to think and she was begging, begging for a miracle to come. Miracles don't exist, Freddie. His eyes gleamed darkly and pierced into her like to small spears as everything else disappeared. The last thing she would ever see were the eyes of her killer. How fitting. Wouldn't that make a great article?

*

Will didn't look up as he heard the door opening. He was still standing in the basement, staring down at two corpses now. He heard a sound at the door, maybe a pleased hum, but he didn't look up.

"You couldn't predict my decision," Will stated silently. He knew that whatever Freddie had found that led her here, she had only found it because Hannibal had wanted her to.

"I cannot predict you, Will. But I can trust you. You had the opportunity to expose me, but you didn't betray my trust."

"What would you have done? If I would have exposed you?"

"We both know I would not have let it come that far."

"You would have killed me."

"You would have forced me to kill you. That is the greatest betrayal I can think of," Hannibal said and finally came closer. He threw a brief look at Freddie's body- strangled, intimate, predatory- and came to a stop next to Will. He reached up and cupped his face, his thumb soothing back a curl as he tilted the young man's head to examine the scratches on his cheek.

"She put up a fight," Will stated and locked eyes with Hannibal, holding the eye contact. The stormy blue suddenly calm and deep, beautifully so. A nameless wild ocean turned into Mariana Trench.

"I expected nothing less," Hannibal replied and traced the shell of Will's ear with his thumb.

He stepped away to get his medical kit and reappeared at Will's side with a soft tissue soaked in disinfectant. He cupped the young man's cheek again and carefully wiped the fabric over the scratches.

"You were taking a huge risk," Will muttered, his eyes slipping closed as Hannibal withdrew the tissue and started to caress his hair.

"Was I?" Hannibal murmured and curled his hand around the back of Will's neck tightly. He pulled him closer and pressed his lips to the other man's. Will stiffened, debating with the few wounded soldiers and then he parted his lips and let his tongue dart forward, before Hannibal's had any chance to invade his mouth. He shoved his tongue past the older man's lips and started to thoroughly explore his mouth. When he heard a small sound and realized he hadn't been the one who had made it, he was almost shocked. He had forgotten what sort

of effect he could have on the doctor. The faint moment of control passed as Hannibal's hand moved to press between Will's legs. The young man moaned into the doctor's mouth and pushed his hips up, trying to get more friction from that teasing hand. His cock was quickly hardening under the attention. Suddenly, Hannibal stepped back and smiled at the tormented sound Will gave at the loss of body contact.

"We're not quite finished, Will."

Will stared at the bodies in front of them and pursed his lips. After a lifetime of 'no's, he reached for a scalpel and confirmed the 'yes' that had been ghosting through his mind ever since he had heard Freddie calling out.

The next hour was a daze. Will wasn't sure what was real because everything seemed like one of the hallucinations that had haunted him all his life. He was drifting in and out of reality but one thing never changed: Blood on his hands and Hannibal by his side. It was morbidly domestic, working side by side like two amorous artists. Suddenly Will's hands stopped moving. He didn't know why, but he knew he was finished. Freddie Lounds was complete. *This is my design.*

He looked up and realized the other corpse was long done and Hannibal was just standing there, watching him. His expression was warm, affectionate, fond. Will looked back to the corpses and felt the fog lifting, the dreamy daze passing.

"So what now?" he asked and put the handsaw he had been holding down. Hannibal took a step closer and lifted Will's hand, just as it was about to brush against his trousers.

"It is virtually impossible to wash out blood stains," he warned and started wiping at Will's hands with a tissue gently, smudging the blood rather than cleaning it off. Will stilled for a moment and his heartbeat resonated in his ears.

"That's not the thoroughness I'd expect from the Chesapeake Ripper," he murmured.

He pulled a still bloody hand free and moved it up to his lips, locking eyes with Hannibal before he dragged his tongue over his fingertips. The doctor reached out and took Will's hand into his own. Skin on skin, blood on blood. He regarded their loosely entangled fingers for a moment, before he pulled Will out of the basement. When their destination became clear, Will started unbuttoning his shirt with bloody fingers and dropped it to the floor as soon as they were standing inside the master bathroom. He reached for Hannibal's shirt and started working the buttons open hastily, greedily, while Hannibal grasped Will's belt and pulled him closer, finding his lips and kissing him deeply. He started working his belt open and when Will was naked expect for his boxer briefs, he stepped aside and ran water in the large, luxury tub, hot and comforting, and soon warm steam clouded the pristine bathroom.

He got rid of the rest of his and Will's clothes and settled into the tub, pulling Will against his chest, the warm water throwing small waves around them. Hannibal ran his hands up Will's chest, touching every inch of skin he could reach, spreading water on his torso and making the young man shiver despite the warmth. He reached for the natural sponge that lay on a little tray next to the tub while his other hand rested on Will's chest, his thumb slowly circling one nipple. Will arched his back into the touch and rested his head on Hannibal's shoulder,

slightly tilted upwards. He closed his eyes when Hannibal gently stroked the sponge over his skin and started nibbling at the older man's jawline. When the wet sponge was still caressing his torso ten minutes later, Will took hold of Hannibal's hand and pushed it lower until the sponge disappeared in the water. Hannibal let go of it in favor of wrapping his hand around Will's length, and the sponge floated to the surface quickly, seesawing on the water, moved by the waves of Hannibal's slow movements as he started stroking. Will gasped and reached up to grasp Hannibal's neck. He pulled his head down until he could reach his lips for a slow, open mouthed kiss. When Hannibal swiped his thumb over the head of Will's cock, the young man broke the kiss with a breathy moan and pushed up into Hannibal's hand. The doctor tightened his grip. Another moan, a bit louder, breaking the silent, steamy melody of the whispering waves of the warm water. Will turned his head until it almost hurt, burying his face in Hannibal's neck despite the unfavorable angle. He bit down and felt the other's pulse between his lips as he started sucking a mark into the damp skin. The older man's breath briefly caught, barely noticeable and he quickened his pace. Will released the skin from his teeth and squeezed his eyes together, knowing he wouldn't last long with all the adrenaline still rushing through him.

"Hannibal" he moaned warningly. In response, Hannibal began moving his other hand again, running it over Will chest until he found a nipple and rubbing it between two fingers until the young man was panting. Suddenly the doctor pinched the flesh bud hard and with the sharp pain mixing with the teasing pleasure, Will couldn't hold back his orgasm anymore and came with a strangled scream. When he was slowly coming down from his high, he turned in a sudden movement, causing some of the water to slosh over the lips of the tub. He spread his thighs until he was straddling Hannibal and bent down to kiss him hungrily, their lips warm and damp from the steam. He ground down against Hannibal's erection and the doctor moved his hands up the back of Will's thighs, pulling him closer to his body.

"Perhaps we should relocate this to the bedroom," Hannibal murmured against Will's lips.

The young man stood up, the water streaming down his naked body, and pulled Hannibal to his feet with him. The doctor reached for a towel and dried Will and himself off before capturing Will's lips in another kiss and guiding him into the bedroom. When Will's legs hit the edge of the bed, he dropped down onto it and sighed when Hannibal climbed over him, pinning him to the bed with his entire weight. Will slid his hands into Hannibal's hair and found his lips again. Suddenly he let out a small, sharp laugh. Hannibal pulled slightly back and looked at Will questioningly. Will grinned somewhat bitterly.

"Now *this* would have made one hell of an article for Ms. Lounds," the young man said. Hannibal rolled off him and lay down by his side, looking at him thoughtfully. Will turned to face him and added: "*Murder Husbands*. She would have typed it, but you're the one who wrote it. My story, controlled by someone who hides his own." Will dropped his gaze and trailed his fingers over Hannibal's chest absentmindedly.

"You control your own story, Will. I merely determined the setting."

"You did a bit more than that. You knew the most fertile way to bring out my instincts would be to force me to protect what I love. So you sent Freddie Lounds here. You determined the setting for me to kill her," Will said and rolled onto his back again, staring up at the ceiling.

“When you brought me here I was a killer by allegation. Now you reached deep enough to prove your theory.”

Hannibal leaned over him and kissed him slowly, deeply, his tongue caressing Will’s mouth. Will closed his eyes and reached up to sink his hand into Hannibal’s hair. Then suddenly the bed shifted and his hand dropped to his side. When Will opened his eyes, Hannibal was getting dressed.

“What are you doing?”

“There is something of importance that has to be done,” Hannibal answered quietly and his face was that of a person who just made a decision.

“You’re leaving? *Now*?” Will asked and sat up in the bed to glare at Hannibal. The older man sighed.

“Will, you are clearly still upset about what happened. I want you to come to terms with what you did before we go any further.”

“I’m not upset. I’m resigned. I gave you what you wanted,” Will answered, his voice getting a tad angrier.

“No, Will. *I* gave you what *you* wanted.”

Will pursed his lips. It wasn’t a lie. He had wanted Freddie Lounds dead since the day he had met her. But had he wanted to kill her?? He had always been hoping she’d just open the wrong door one day and get herself killed. What hadn’t crossed his mind was that he would be the one answering the door.

“Then let me return the courtesy,” Will said and stood, quickly shoving Hannibal against the wall and kissing him passionately.

The doctor stood still for a moment before he reached up and placed both hands on Will’s chest to gently push him away.

“Will, I don’t want you to regret this later,” he said firmly.

“I won’t,” Will answered and went for the other’s lips again only to be pushed back.

“There is no harm in postponing this until you are certain. A lot has happened today. You shouldn’t underestimate the effect a rushed decision could have.”

And with those words and a soft kiss to Will’s forehead he left, leaving the young man alone and frustrated in the dark bedroom.

He was certain, wasn’t he? Wasn’t he?

He sighed and dropped to bed. He wasn’t. He couldn’t be. Everything that had led to this point had been an outcome of manipulation. Manipulation he admittedly hadn’t fended off since he saw it for what it was. If the situation would be any different, if he wouldn’t be

trapped in Hannibal's house, in his proximity, under his influence, Freddie Lounds would likely still be alive. His feelings wouldn't change, but he'd have a chance to escape them. He could create distance. But like this, being caught deep inside Hannibal's shell, seeing and knowing what no one else did, this had been inevitable. He was slave to his feelings and Hannibal held the chains closely. This had been a well-planned dance from the very beginning. Every slight nudge and twitch a silent encouragement for another step, another turn. A dance and a hunt. But was Will really prey if he had been *so willing*? He had evolved through Hannibal. Grown towards hell a little more. All that had been controlled by Hannibal. But what he didn't control, what he couldn't control, was that Will craved every push that brought him closer to the brink of sanity. Hannibal could manipulate him into doing things, but he couldn't control how Will felt about the manipulation. Couldn't control that he wanted it, and that was exactly why Will's only chance would be to get as far away from Hannibal as possible. Not to be safe from the Ripper, but to be safe from himself. From his own desires. But leaving wasn't an option, was it? His old life was over, Hannibal had seen to that. He had nowhere to go. He had no choice. And he was glad for it.

Chapter 17

.... What if I told you that in the year of our Lord 2022, this might soon receive its first update in ages?

In my defence, I had cancer.

I also wrote a book! If you enjoy my writing and love Hannigram, it will be right up your alley!

It would mean a lot if some people checked it out!

It's got gays, angst, gore and all that fun stuff ;)

Blurb:

A story of deep, unconditional love between a criminal enforcer and the dirty cop who functions as his informant on a murder case. With the odds stacked against them - be it because of the mysterious crime syndicate they work for, or because of their own buried, traumatic pasts - they embark on the terrifying, confusing journey of human connection, proving at every corner that true love conquers all.

Jacob Rossi is a skilled young officer with the Ladena police department, but his moral ambiguity and lack of care for the job drew him into a world of crime years ago. Riddled with self-hatred, he exists in a state of perpetual numbness, until he starts working more closely with the cold, seemingly emotionless Dimitri Moreno, a sadistic enforcer of an organisation called The Trust.

Dimitri is an expert at detachment, which has made him capable of doing unspeakable things, but he soon realises he cannot detach from his feelings for Jacob. The clever, guarded cop unearths things inside him he never thought possible and never thought he could want. After years of feeling like a monster, Dimitri suddenly feels painfully human.

It becomes clear that their intense, highly irregular love is stronger than the demons that surround them.

Link:

[The Trust](#)

Note: If the link doesn't work, please search "Gordian Souls" in your amazon store!

Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Hannibal sat in his car, complete darkness surrounding him. He had been driving through Baltimore without a true destination, just wanting to give his head the chance to clear. The day had been beyond overwhelming. He had sent Freddie Lounds to his house, directly into the lion's den. The lion being Will. At least that was what he had hoped. Of course, the possibility that Will would make a different decision had been present in his mind, but Hannibal didn't leave anything to chance. If Freddie Lounds had tried to call Jack they would have discovered that her phone had no signal. If they had tried to run, they would have discovered that Ms. Lounds' car wouldn't start. Nothing was left to coincidence, nothing considered unlikely. But Will had chosen the darkness over the illusion of light. When Hannibal entered the basement and saw Freddie Lounds' body, deep, heartfelt pride had rushed through him, so hot and intense it felt like walking through fire. He couldn't deny anymore what he had been avoiding to see for months. This was more than lust, pride, longing, possessiveness, or curiosity.

He loved Will.

And that was why he had left. His plan had been simple, he had been in control, but that plan hadn't accounted for love. It hadn't accounted for the sudden feeling of infinity. The desire to make another person happy, to put them first, to be the reason for their smile. His plan had been simple. Love wasn't. After musing in the dark a while longer, Hannibal started his car. There was someone he needed to talk to. He knew what he had to do.

*

Will sat up with a start when he heard the door and shifted on the couch, unsure what to expect. He had been trying to read but his mind wouldn't shut up. Now it was basically screaming as Hannibal approached. Will rose from the couch and glanced at the older man curiously. Something had changed. Hannibal closed the distance between them and wrapped his arms around Will's waist to pull him close. He kissed him so deeply and passionately, Will saw stars. When he pulled away, Will gasped for air and eyed Hannibal warily. The kiss had spoken of pure desperation, and something in Hannibal's eyes betrayed the same as he cleared his throat.

"Apparently new evidence considering the Budge-case has come to light. A former patient of Dr. Chilton has confessed to the murder," he said, looking at Will with an unreadable expression.

The Chesapeake Ripper can be very persuasive.

"You can leave if you wish, Will. Your car is parked across from John Hopkins Hospital."

Will stared at Hannibal blankly while he was trying to make sense of what he had just said. Leave? Suddenly leaving was an option? He could go. He could leave. Escape. The door was wide open. His old life restored.

He didn't want leaving to be an option. He wanted to be forced to stay, because he knew as soon as he had a choice, he would be forced to do the only rational thing. This changed everything. He was free. Or was he? Did this change anything at all? How could he run from something he wanted to run after? He actually could leave, without doing further damage. Leaving with Freddie Lounds would have meant exposing Hannibal. He hadn't truly had a choice back then. But now he did. A thought shot into his head. Alana. Beverly. His dogs. He wanted to see them again. Maybe he could be normal again. He didn't want to be. He didn't want to have a choice, but the wounded soldiers had gained new strength and screamed at him.

Run

And Will did. He turned around and rushed towards the door, ignoring sharp pain around his heart that increased with every step. Ignoring the feeling that his heart was tied to Hannibal and that the strings tightened around it with every inch of distance. Ignoring the pain, the repugnancy, the desperation. Ignoring and running. He told himself once there was enough distance it would hurt less. He told himself he was doing the right thing.

Hannibal gazed after the young man. For the first time in his life, he hadn't expected anything. He hadn't planned anything out. He hadn't manipulated. He hadn't been the puppeteer. He had just cut the strings and waited. He hadn't expected anything, but that didn't lessen the pain when the puppet ran. He had hoped that, maybe, the feelings he knew Will had for him, would be strong enough to keep him in his arms. He had hoped the darkness he had shared with Will was holding him tightly enough to stop him from leaving. How foolish he had been. But he couldn't change anything. He did what he had to do. He wanted Will to be happy, he always had, but now he wanted him to be happy on his own terms. It would have never been true if it would have felt forced. He wanted to give Will a choice, to give him an out, but he hadn't quite been prepared for the renowned emptiness when he took it. Still, he couldn't have let things go on like this. The thought that Will only stayed with him because he had to had been plaguing him and now that that thought had turned into a fact, he felt angry. Angry and hurt. Two emotions he hadn't felt to this extent since his childhood. Another person to love, to care for, only to be taken from him. But this hurt in a different way. Will hadn't been taken from him, he had willingly left.

He knew Will wouldn't tell Jack the Chesapeake Ripper's identity and he wanted to believe it was because he cared for him, but the knowledge that he would likely only do it because Hannibal had Freddie Lounds' murder to hold against him burned in the back of his head like a wildfire.

Hannibal forced his feelings down until he couldn't reach them anymore and grief quickly turned into resignation. He stepped forward and slowly closed the door Will had disappeared through minutes earlier.

*

“Abel Gideon claims to have killed Tobias Budge and tried to kill you. Can you confirm that?”

Will stared at the mirror opposite blankly and wondered who was watching. He thought about the man he had never met in his life and nodded. What other choice did he have?

“We could determine a clear connection between Michael Wiss and Abel Gideon. Did you know about Gideon?”

Will shook his head. He wasn't really present; he was relying on instinct as he answered Jack's questions while his mind was elsewhere.

“Did you know Tobias Budge?”

“He came to Phillip's Bay once,” Will answered without acknowledging the fact that he was speaking or recognizing his own voice.

“You disappeared from the radar for three months. Did you have any help?”

Three months. He had been gone from the real world for three months. Will couldn't decide whether his time with Hannibal had seemed far shorter or far longer.

He shook his head again and fumbled with his car keys. He had gone directly to FBI and wanted nothing more than to go home now. He realized it felt foreign to think of Wolf Trap as home. It felt wrong. It wasn't his home anymore. His home was with Hannibal, in the darkness. But he had escaped that home, hadn't he?

“Did either Tobias Budge or Abel Gideon tell you anything about the Chesapeake Ripper?”

That woke Will from his reverie and he finally looked up to meet Jack's eyes very briefly. There was relief there, but also suspicion and a great deal of desperate hope.

“I know what you're hoping to find, Jack, but Abel Gideon is not the Chesapeake Ripper.”

Jack's jaw clenched and he wrote something down on the notepad in front of him.

“Have you talked to Freddie Lounds in the past three months?”

He felt a trembling body between his hands, slowly squeezing the life out of it until it went limp and sunk to the floor, red locks spreading on the smooth white floor, cold air and hot breath.

“I haven't talked to anyone. I was *hiding* Jack.”

“Freddie Lounds is missing,” Jack said; his voice harsh and somehow accusing. There still was that suspicious glimmer in his eyes. “She went after the Chesapeake Ripper.”

“Then I assume she found him.”

“She found something.”

Jack took a file from the box on the table and spread pictures on the table in front of Will. Budge’s crime scene. He knew Jack was trying to trigger a reaction and stared at the photos blankly. He couldn’t help appreciating the display. It was so personal, so *Hannibal*. A courtship.

“This *is* the Ripper, Will,” Jack said. It sounded almost like a plea. *Confirm that the man we have in custody is the Chesapeake Ripper. Please.*

“No, Jack. You see what you want to see. The Ripper is still out there,” Will replied. He knew it was only a matter of time until Hannibal would kill again. He knew it was only a matter of time until Freddie Lounds would be found. The clock was spinning and there was no stopping it, no rewinding it.

When he arrived at his house, he could barely manage a smile as his dogs stormed towards him. Alana followed behind them and immediately pulled Will into a tight embrace. He stood stiffly for a moment before he brought his hands up hesitantly. She pulled back and stared at him with big, watery eyes.

“Promise me you’ll never get in a situation like that again,” she whispered.

Will stared into her eyes and was once again reminded why he ought to avoid them. What he saw hurt, even if it wasn’t far from the truth.

“You believed them. You thought I killed that man.”

Alana’s eyes widened and a tear trickled down her face.

“Will-“ she breathed, barely audible. “I’m so sorry.”

“Don’t be. It’s your job to conjecture,” he said a bit harshly and went inside, leaving her on the porch alone.

Once inside, he downed more whiskey than he’d care to admit and settled on the couch, staring off into space blankly.

He was doing the right thing. He didn’t have another choice.

Didn’t you?

His mind whispered.

You could be in Baltimore now, with him. What would be so wrong about that? What do you have left to lose? You're on a one-way road, and you've long passed the last exit.

Another glass of whiskey and his mind fell silent.

*

Life went on. It went on, and Will wondered if it had always been that dull before he had met Hannibal. Nothing seemed to be of importance, the world was grey. Nothing really mattered anymore. In the blink of an eye, two months had passed. Two months without seeing Hannibal even once. He had driven by his house often, but never stopped. Don't ever stop. Keep going. You're free. You'll regret it if you go back. Never stop.

Will started working at Phillip's Bay again and waited for the sting that would come every night at 7:30pm. The sting when table 5 remained empty. Just as empty as Will. Again. Hannibal had made him empty again. But the sting, the pain, the anger he felt when he looked at the table, those were feelings he savored, because it seemed to be the last feelings left in him. The only emotions that remained. Another month passed, Christmas came and went, Will spent it alone. He didn't care. It wasn't until May that he started caring again. Suddenly, there was another choice to be made. Another chance.

Will came home from a late shift and was surprised to find a small envelope on his doorstep. He didn't need to look at the sender; he knew the second he saw the thick, heavy stationary and the dark ink. Will swallowed hard and sunk onto the stairs of the porch, still wearing his tux. He just sat there for a while and started at the paper. It seemed to become heavier and heavier in his hands. Will realized he felt guilty. Unbearably, thoroughly guilty. For leaving, for not returning, for giving in just to pull back again. For fleeing instead of staying and accepting his defeat as the victory it was. The paper made a dry, rustling sound when he opened the envelope. He was almost disappointed when inside, he didn't find a letter, but then again he was certain the words that had been left unsaid between them couldn't be put into a letter. No, instead of a long, heartfelt message, he found a ticket.

The Trojan War Will Not Take Place

by Jean Giraudoux

Center Stage, Baltimore

24th of May, 20:30

Will stared at the ticket blankly. A lot of thoughts were racing through his head. Too many thoughts. First there was relief. Relief that he hadn't been forgotten. That he hadn't been

deemed unworthy. Then there was anger. Anger that he'd been given yet another choice. Anger that he'd been given the chance to come back when he had managed to escape. And lastly there was awareness. Awareness that he had never truly escaped. Awareness that after all these months he was drained of everything that Hannibal had brought to bloom. Awareness that no matter what sanity he might have left, he would ignore it. That he would see that it wasn't important. That the only thing that was important was Hannibal. Awareness that on the 24th of May, he would see him again.

*

"I don't know what happened between you two, but *thank god* you've finally come to your senses," Beverly muttered. She was sitting outside the changing cubicles and let her gaze wander over the huge amount of grosgrain and satin around her.

Will couldn't help a bitter smile at her words. *Come to your senses*. Any rational mind would say that was the complete opposite of what he was doing. What he was doing was completely insane, but that wasn't a word that really bothered Will anymore. The young man stared at the mirror in the narrow cubicle. He tried to see himself with Hannibal's eyes and then he tried to picture the look in Hannibal's eyes when would see him again. Would he be surprised? Would he be uncertain? Did he feel the same anxiety as Will?

"Hey, don't forget about me, Romeo. I wanna see!" Bev shouted outside.

Will hadn't exactly asked her to come with him, but since she kept digging around in the mess that was Hannibal, she'd found out about the theater and had insisted to help Will pick an outfit. Not that he had accepted her help or agreed in any way, but she didn't mind just following him into the store, even though he had ignored her at first. Now, he stepped out with a sigh and was greeted by her excited, expectant eyes. She scanned him head to toe with visible amazement.

Will looked down at himself. The suit was made of light silk and hugged his body in all the right places. It was simple, no patterns or spectacular buttons, but the navy blue looked noble and soft and contrasted the lighter blue of his eyes. The shiny, black button up was the perfect partner, making the navy blue of the suit gleam even brighter. The first few buttons were left open, tie or bowtie respectfully refused by the rest of the outfit. It was elegant and beautiful, but it was also casual in a way and had something extremely *Will*.

"Can you please give me the number of Satan, I want to sell my soul for infinite beauty too," Bev commented dramatically. Will rolled her eyes at her and she grinned.

"I'm serious. You look perfect. If Dr. Lecter changes his mind I'd gladly take over for him," she added and winked. "Now pay before *you* change your mind," she said and quickly waved for one of the shop assistants to come over.

Twenty minutes later Will was in his car, the bag with the suit on the passenger seat. He stared at it warily and sat back to patiently listen to all his doubts, loudly complaining inside his head. When they ran out of arguments, a soft voice in the back of his head whispered:

You're doing the right thing.

Chapter End Notes

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